

BX

9847

.S8

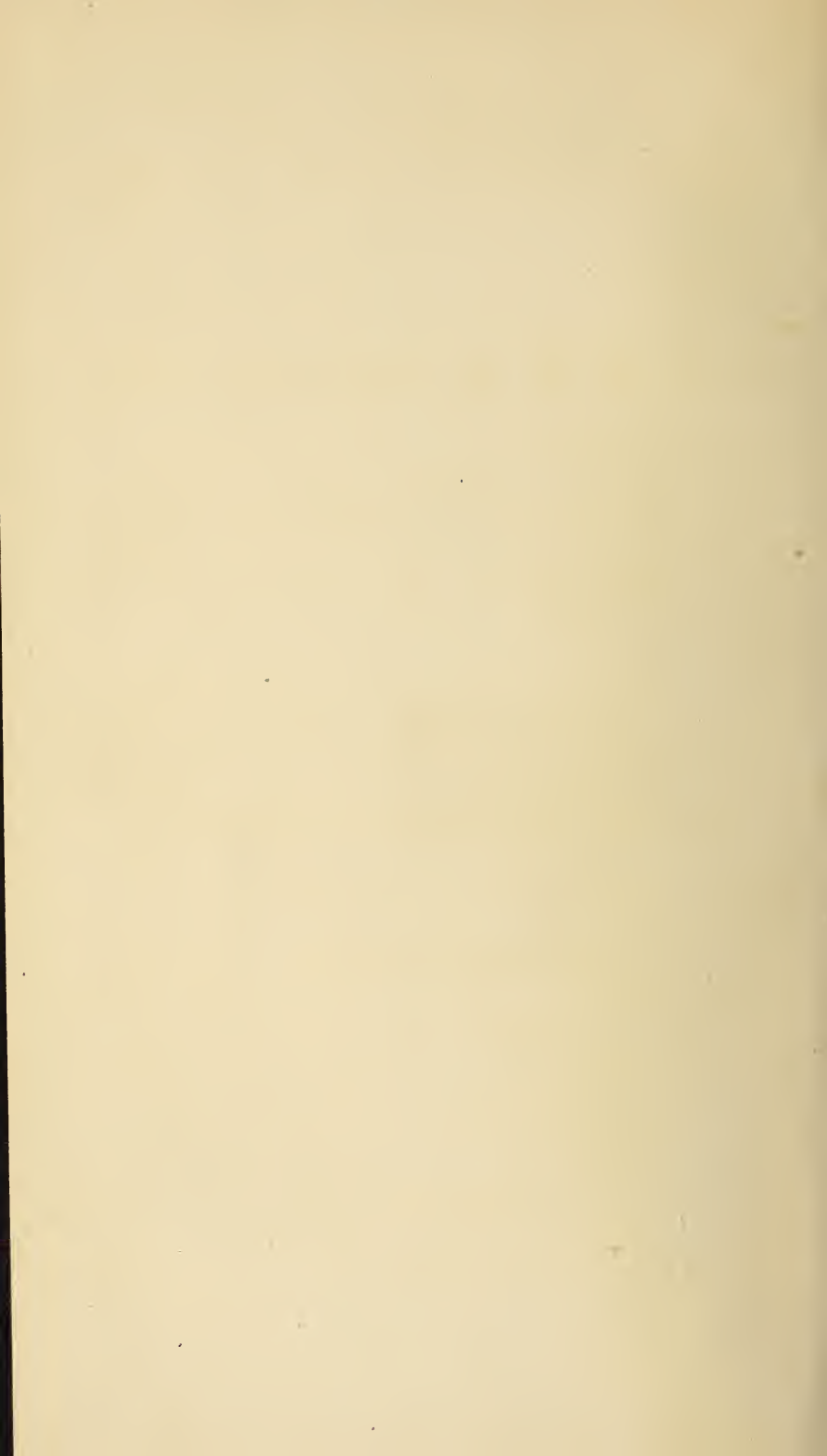
1819a



Class BX9847

Book S8

1819a



1
137
2568

LETTERS

TO THE

REV. WM. E. CHANNING,

CONTAINING

REMARKS ON HIS SERMON,

RECENTLY

PREACHED AND PUBLISHED AT BALTIMORE.

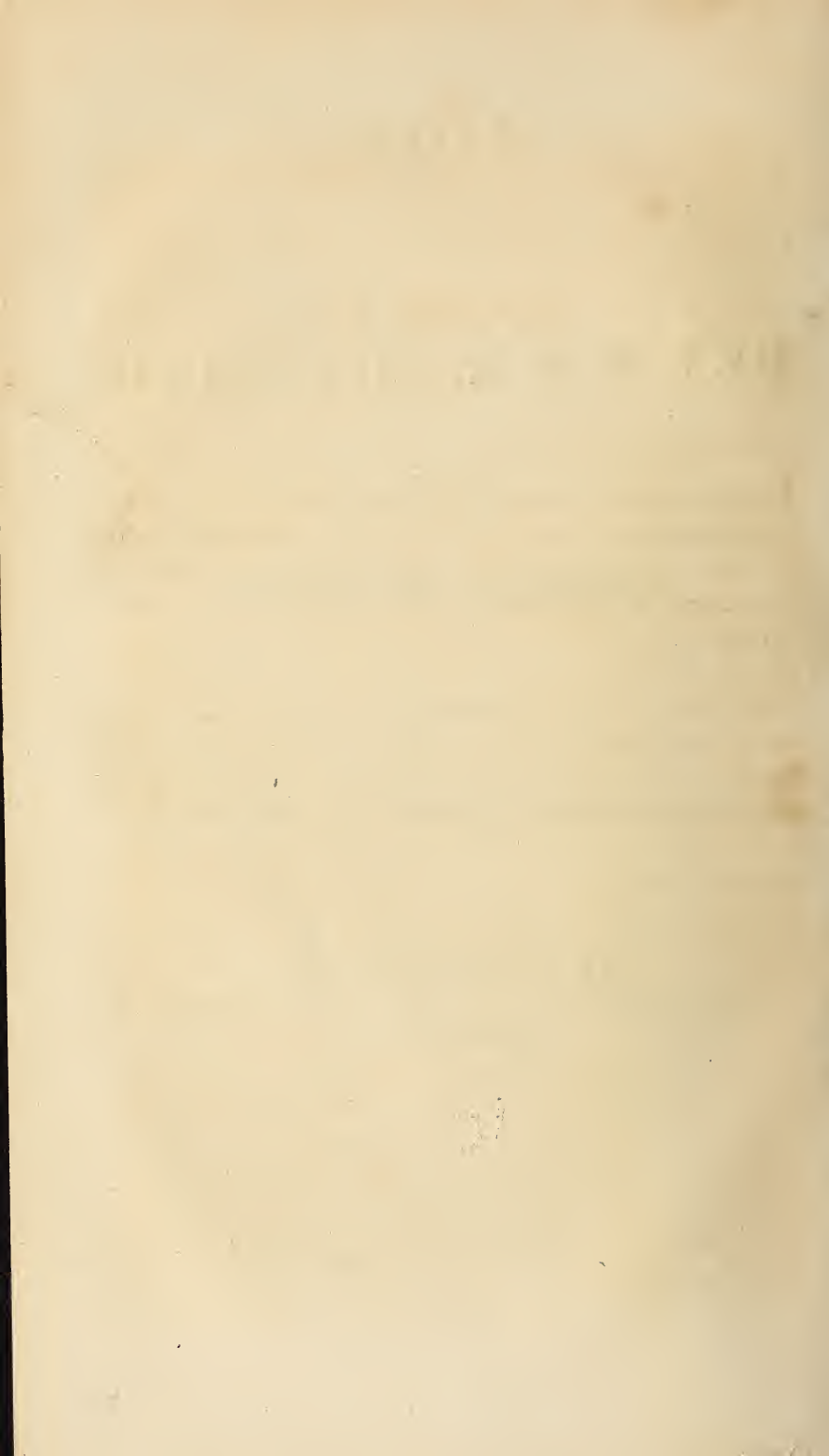
BY MOSES STUART,

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF SACRED LITERATURE IN THE THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY, ANDOVER.

ANDOVER:

PUBLISHED BY FLAGG AND GOULD.

1819.



BX9847

.58

1819w

LETTER I.



Reverend and Dear Sir,

I HAVE recently perused a Sermon, delivered by you at the ordination of the Rev. J. Sparks, in Baltimore, with no small degree of interest. The subjects of which it treats must be regarded as highly important, by every intelligent man, who is a serious inquirer after revealed truth. And if the views which you have developed will stand the test of examination, and prove to be those which the word of God maintains, or which it will justify; it certainly will be the duty of every friend to Christianity, to embrace and promote them.

I have endeavoured to read and reflect upon your Sermon, without prejudice or party feeling; and to weigh the arguments, and examine the views which it presents, with a wish to know and believe the truth. I dare not flatter myself, indeed, that I have entirely succeeded in doing this; for every man who is acquainted with his own heart, will find reason to believe, that he often has been, and may be deceived by it. Will you permit me, however, to lay before you my thoughts in regard to three topics of your discourse, which stand in close connexion with each other, and which are among the principal points, wherein I feel myself compelled to dissent from your opinions?

The points to which I refer are ; The principles of interpreting Scripture ; The unity of God ; and the divinity and humanity of the Saviour. I limit myself to these three, because it would make a book and not a pamphlet, to examine all the statements of doctrines which you have made, (and to write a book would require time and health which I have not to spare ;) and because, if the principles of reasoning and the results which you deduce from them, in regard to some of the points on which I am about to remark, are incorrect, or untenable, the influence of this must extend itself *essentially*, to most of the remaining topics, which you have presented.

The general principles of interpreting Scripture, you designate in the following manner.

“ We regard the Scriptures as the records of God’s successive revelations to mankind, and particularly of the last and most perfect revelation of his will by Jesus Christ. Whatever doctrines seem to us to be clearly taught in the Scriptures, we receive without reserve or exception. We do not, however, attach equal importance to all the books in this collection. Our religion, we believe, lies chiefly in the New Testament. The dispensation of Moses, compared with that of Jesus, we consider as imperfect, earthly, obscure, adapted to the childhood of the human race, a preparation for a nobler system, and chiefly useful now as serving to confirm and illustrate the Christian Scriptures. Jesus Christ is the only master of Christians, and whatever he taught, either during his personal ministry, or by his inspired apostles, we regard as of divine authority, and profess to make the rule of our lives.

“ This authority which we give to the Scriptures, is a reason, we conceive, for studying them with peculiar care, and for inquiring anxiously into the principles of interpretation, by which their true meaning may be ascertained. The principles adopted by the class of Christians, in whose name I speak, need to be explained, because they are often misunderstood. We are particularly accused of making an unwarrantable use of reason in the interpretation of Scripture. We are said to exalt reason above revelation, to prefer our own wisdom to God’s. Loose and undefined charges of this kind are circulated so freely, and with such injurious intentions, that we think it due to ourselves, and to the cause of truth, to express our views with some particularity.

“Our leading principle in interpreting Scripture is this, that the Bible is a book written for men, in the language of men, and that its meaning is to be sought in the same manner, as that of other books. We believe that God, when he condescends to speak and write, submits, if we may so say, to the established rules of speaking and writing. How else would the Scriptures avail us more than if communicated in an unknown tongue ?

“Now all books, and all conversation, require in the reader or hearer the constant exercise of reason ; or their true import is only to be obtained by continual comparison and inference. Human language, you well know, admits various interpretations, and every word and every sentence must be modified and explained according to the subject which is discussed, according to the purposes, feelings, circumstances and principles of the writer, and according to the genius and idioms of the language which he uses.—These are acknowledged principles in the interpretation of human writings ; and a man, whose words we should explain without reference to these principles, would reproach us justly with a criminal want of candour, and an intention of obscuring or distorting his meaning.

“Were the Bible written in a language and style of its own, did it consist of words, which admit but a single sense, and of sentences wholly detached from each other, there would be no place for the principles now laid down. We could not reason about it, as about other writings. But such a book would be of little worth ; and perhaps, of all books, the Scriptures correspond least to this description. The word of God bears the stamp of the same hand, which we see in his works. It has infinite connexions and dependencies. Every proposition is linked with others, and is to be compared with others, that its full and precise import may be understood. Nothing stands alone. The New Testament is built on the Old. The Christian dispensation is a continuation of the Jewish, the completion of a vast scheme of providence, requiring great extent of view in the reader. Still more, the Bible treats of subjects on which we receive ideas from other sources besides itself ; such subjects as the nature, passions, relations, and duties of man ; and it expects us to restrain and modify its language by the known truths, which observation and experience furnish on these topics.

“We profess not to know a book, which demands a more frequent exercise of reason than the Bible. In addition to the remarks now made on its infinite connexions, we may observe, that its style nowhere affects the precision of science, or the accuracy of definition. Its language is singularly glowing, bold and figurative, demanding more frequent departures from the literal sense, than that of our own age and country, and consequently demands more continual exercise of judgment. We find too, that the different portions of this book, instead of being confined to general truths, refer perpetually to the times when they were written, to states of society, to modes of thinking, to controversies in the church, to feelings and usages which have passed away, and without the knowledge of which we are con-

stantly in danger of extending to all times, and places, what was of temporary and local application. We find, too, that some of these books are strongly marked by the genius and character of their respective writers, that the Holy Spirit did not so guide the apostles as to suspend the peculiarities of their minds, and that a knowledge of their feelings, and of the influences under which they were placed, is one of the preparations for understanding their writings. With these views of the Bible, we feel it our bounden duty to exercise our reason upon it perpetually, to compare, to infer, to look beyond the letter to the spirit, to seek in the nature of the subject, and the aim of the writer, his true meaning; and, in general, to make use of what is known, for explaining what is difficult, and for discovering new truths.

“ Need I descend to particulars to prove that the Scriptures demand the exercise of reason? Take, for example, the style in which they generally speak of God, and observe how habitually they apply to him human passions and organs. Recollect the declarations of Christ, that he came not to send peace, but a sword; that unless we eat his flesh, and drink his blood, we have no life in us; that we must hate father and mother: pluck out the right eye; and a vast number of passages equally bold and unlimited. Recollect the unqualified manner in which it is said of Christians that they possess all things, know all things, and can do all things. Recollect the verbal contradiction between Paul and James, and the apparent clashing of some parts of Paul’s writings, with the general doctrines and end of Christianity. I might extend the enumeration indefinitely, and who does not see, that we must limit all these passages by the known attributes of God, of Jesus Christ, and of human nature, and by the circumstances under which they were written, so as to give the language a quite different import from what it would require, had it been applied to different beings, or used in different connexions.

“ Enough has been said to show in what sense we make use of reason in interpreting Scripture. From a variety of possible interpretations, we select that which accords with the nature of the subject, and the state of the writer, with the connexion of the passage, with the general strain of Scripture, with the known character and will of God, and with the obvious and acknowledged laws of nature. In other words, we believe that God never contradicts, in one part of Scripture, what he teaches in another; and never contradicts, in revelation, what he teaches in his works and providence. And we, therefore, distrust every interpretation, which, after deliberate attention, seems repugnant to any established truth. We reason about the Bible precisely as civilians do about the constitution under which we live; who, you know, are accustomed to limit one provision of that venerable instrument by others, and to fix the precise import of its parts by inquiring into its general spirit, into the intentions of its authors, and into the prevalent feelings, impressions, and circumstances of the time when it was framed. Without these principles of interpretation, we frankly acknowledge, that we cannot defend the divine authority of the Scrip-

tures. Deny us this latitude, and we must abandon this book to its enemies." pp. 3—6.

To a great part of these principles, I give my cheerful and most cordial assent. They are the principles which I apply to the explanation of the Scriptures, from day to day, in my private studies and in my public labours. They are the principles, by which I am conducted to the opinions that I have espoused; and by which, so far as I am able, I expect to defend these opinions, whenever called in duty to do it.

While I thus give my general and cordial approbation to most that has been presented, in the extract above; will you indulge me in expressing a wish, that the rank and value of the Old Testament, in the Christian's library, had been described in somewhat different terms? I do most fully accord with the idea, that the gospel, or the New Testament, is more perfect than the Mosaic law; or than the Old Testament, in a comparative sense. On what other ground, can the assertions of Paul, in 2 Cor. iii, in Heb. viii, and in other places, be believed or justified? The gospel gives a clearer view, than the Jewish Scriptures, of our duty and our destiny; of the objects of our hopes and fears; of the character of God and the way of salvation. I agree fully, that whatever in the Old Testament respects the Jews, simply as Jews; such as their ritual, their food, their dress, their civil polity, their government; in one word, whatever from its nature was *national* and *local*, is not binding upon us under the Christian dispensation. I am well satisfied too, that the character of God, and the duty of men, were, in many respects, less clearly revealed under the ancient dispensation. "The law came by Moses;"—yet "no man hath seen God at any time; the only be-

gotten, who dwelleth in the bosom of the Father, *He hath revealed him :*” i. e., it was reserved for Christ to make a *full* display of the divine character; no man ever had such knowledge of God as enabled him to do it. I am aware that many Christians do not seem to understand this passage; and with well meaning but mistaken views, deduce the character and designs of God, as fully and as clearly from the Old Testament, as from the New.

I must believe too, that the duties of Christians are, in most things, more fully and definitely taught in the gospel, than in the Old Testament; and I cannot approve of that method of reasoning, which deduces our duties principally from texts in the Old Testament, that sometimes are less clear, when the New Testament presents the subject in such characters of light, that he who runneth may read.

But when you say, “ Jesus Christ is the only master of Christians, and whatever he taught, either during his personal ministry, or by his inspired apostles, we regard as of divine authority, and profess to make the rule of our lives;” does not this naturally imply, that we are absolved from any obligation to receive the Old Testament, in any sense, as our guide; and that what it teaches, we are not bound “ to make the rule of our lives?” I do not feel certain that it was your design to affirm this; but the words in their connexion seem naturally to bear this import. To this view, I should object; that such parts of the Old Testament as express the will of God, in reference to those great points of duty that must, from the nature of moral beings, be forever the same under every dispensation, may and ought to be regarded as unrepealed; for it is a very sound maxim in the in-

terpretation of divine as well as human laws, that *manente ratione, manet ipsa lex* ; *A law is unrepealed, while the reason of that law continues.* The case of an express repeal only, can exempt from the application of this maxim. And when our Saviour says, that “Heaven and earth shall sooner pass away, than one jot or tittle of the law shall pass, until all be fulfilled ;” he seems to me plainly to have declared the immutability of the ancient *moral* law, in the sense already explained.

What shall we say, moreover, to the devotional parts of the Old Testament, (the book of Psalms for instance;) or those numerous prophetical parts, which are sermons on the duties and obligations of men, or predictions of a future Messiah and of the nature and prosperity of his church? Are these any more Jewish (except as to the garb in which they are clothed,) than Christian? I admit that they are all less perfect, than what the New Testament presents us with, on the same topics; but I believe them to be sanctioned by the same authority, and to require a similar respect and deference.

As to what follows, in the passage above quoted; nothing is clearer to my apprehension, than that God, when he speaks to men, speaks in language which is used by those whom he addresses. Of course, the language of the Bible is to be interpreted by the same laws, so far as philology is concerned, as that of any other book. I ask with you; How else is the Bible a *Revelation*? How else can men ever come to agree in what manner the Scriptures should be interpreted, or feel any assurance that they have attained to the meaning of its language?

I find little from which I should dissent, in the remainder of your observations upon the principles of interpretation. I might, perhaps, make some objection

to the manner in which the office of reason, in the interpretation of Scripture, is occasionally described. But I am confident, that I admit as fully as you do or can do, the *proper office* of reason, in the whole matter of religion, both in doctrine and practice. It is our reason, to which the arguments that prove the divine origin of Christianity are addressed; and by reason, that we prove or admit this, as to its general historical grounds. Reason prescribes, (or at any rate developes and sanctions,) the laws of interpreting Scripture. The cases which you have presented are, in general, striking exemplifications of this. But when reason is satisfied that the Bible is the book of God, by proof which she cannot reject, and yet preserve her character; and when she has decided what laws of exegesis the nature of human language requires; the office that remains for her in regard to the Scripture, is the application of those laws to the actual interpretation of the Bible. When by their application, she becomes satisfied what the sacred writers really meant in any case, she receives it without hesitation whether doctrine or precept. It is the highest office of reason to believe facts or doctrines, which God has asserted to be true, although the manner in which these things exist, or can be explained, is beyond her reach. In one word; the Scriptures being once admitted to be the word of God, or as of divine authority; the sole office of reason in respect to them is to act as the interpreter of Revelation, and not in any case as legislator. It is limited to judging of the laws of exegesis, and the application of them, in order to discover simply what the sacred writers meant to assert. This being discovered, it is either to be received, in that simple state in which they have left it; or their

divine authority is to be rejected, and we are to cast off our obligation to believe all which they assert. There is no alternative ; no middle way, in this case. Philosophy has no right to interfere here. If she ever interferes, it must be when the question is pending, whether the Bible is divine. Nor has system, prejudice, sectarian feeling, or any thing whatever of a similar nature—neither orthodoxy nor heterodoxy, so called, any right to interfere. The claims of the Bible to be authoritative once being admitted, the simple question is, What does it mean?—And of any particular passage ; What idea did the original writer mean to convey ? When this is ascertained by the legitimate rules of interpretation, this is authoritative ; this is *orthodoxy* in the highest and best sense of the word ; and every thing which differs from it, which modifies it, which fritters its meaning away, is *heterodoxy*, is *heresy* ; to whatever name or party it is attached.

I presume you will agree, without hesitation, to these principles. The grand Protestant maxim, that *the Bible is our only and sufficient rule of faith and practice*, amounts most clearly to the very same thing which I have stated ; and which every man must admit, that acknowledges the paramount claims of the Bible to be believed, and has any tolerable acquaintance with the subject of its interpretation.

If there be any thing to which I should object, in your statement generally considered of the laws of Interpretation, it is rather in the coloring which has been given to some of the language in which it is expressed. You commence with saying, that your party are charged with “ exalting reason above revelation ;” with “ preferring their own wisdom to God’s ;” and that these

charges are "circulated freely and with injurious intentions." You will readily acknowledge, as a general fact, that there is difficulty in giving an impartial statement of opinions, which we thus strongly feel to have been misrepresented? We certainly, in such cases, are under temptation to set off our own views to the best advantage, and to place those of our opponents in the most disadvantageous light.

With the two last paragraphs of your sermon, that are quoted above, I wish not to be understood as signifying that I entirely agree. It is, however, rather the *application* of some exegetical principles that is introduced into them, than the principles themselves, from which I dissent. I shall have occasion to remark hereafter on this subject, and have mentioned it here, merely to prevent any mistake with regard to my meaning, in what I say upon the laws of interpretation, as exhibited by you.

I am happy to find you frank enough to admit, that the principles of interpretation which you defend, are not original, or peculiar to your party; although you seem to qualify this, by saying that "*all Christians occasionally adopt them.*" If I understand you rightly, then, you would admit, that only Unitarians receive and practise upon the *whole system of exegesis*, which you have described. In this, however, if this be your meaning, you are mistaken; at least, it appears plainly so to me, as far as I am acquainted with the men called orthodox, in New England, at the present time. I doubt whether any man can study the science of interpretation, for a considerable time together, without adopting, *for substance*, those principles of it, which you seem to claim appropriately, (as a *whole*,) for Unitarians,

How can it be explained, then, that supposing you and I are both sincerely seeking after truth, and that both adopt, for substance, the same maxims of interpretation, we should differ so widely in the results that flow from the application of these principles? Perhaps this question may have some light thrown upon it, in the sequel of these letters.



LETTER II.

Reverend and Dear Sir,

I COULD wish to find as much in your sermon respecting the doctrine of the Trinity, with which I might accord, as in your principles of interpretation. My apprehensions respecting this doctrine, however, differ from yours. I have not hastily, nor without examination and reflection, embraced my present views of this subject. Nor can I say that I am convinced, by perusing your statement of the doctrine and the arguments against it, that I am erroneous in my views respecting it.

You will not expect me, however, in these letters, which are intended to be brief, to go into a general discussion of this great subject, which shall embrace all the important topics which it presents. I intend to touch only on those points, on which the hinge of the controversy seems to me to turn; and these, in a manner as summary as the nature and difficulty of the case will permit.

The statement which you make of your own faith in regard to the unity of God, and your account of the doctrine of the Trinity, are as follows:—

"*First.* We believe in the doctrine of God's UNITY, or that there is one God, and one only. To this truth we give infinite importance, and we feel ourselves bound to take heed, lest any man spoil us of it by vain philosophy. The proposition, *that there is one God* seems to us exceedingly plain. We understand by it, that there is one being, one mind, one person, one intelligent agent, and one only, to whom underived and infinite perfection and dominion belong. We conceive, that these words could have conveyed no other meaning to the simple and uncultivated people, who were set apart to be the depositaries of this great truth, and who were utterly incapable of understanding those hair breadth distinctions between *being* and *person*, which the sagacity of latter ages has discovered. We find no intimation, that this language was to be taken in an unusual sense, or that God's unity was a quite different thing from the oneness of other intelligent beings.

"We object to the doctrine of the Trinity, that it subverts the unity of God. According to this doctrine, there are three infinite and equal persons, possessing supreme divinity, called the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Each of these persons, as described by theologians, has his own particular consciousness, will, and perceptions. They love each other, converse with each other, and delight in each other's society. They perform different parts in man's redemption, each having his appropriate office, and neither doing the work of the other. The Son is mediator, and not the Father. The Father sends the Son, and is not himself sent; nor is he conscious, like the Son, of taking flesh. Here then, we have three intelligent agents, possessed of different consciousnesses, different wills, and different perceptions, performing different acts, and sustaining different relations; and if these things do not imply and constitute three minds or beings, we are utterly at a loss to know how three minds or beings are to be formed. It is difference of properties, and acts, and consciousness, which leads us to the belief of different intelligent beings, and if this mark fail us, our whole knowledge falls; we have no proof, that all the agents and persons in the universe are not one and the same mind. When we attempt to conceive of three Gods, we can do nothing more, than represent to ourselves three agents, distinguished from each other by similar marks and peculiarities to those, which separate the persons of the Trinity: and when common Christians hear these persons spoken of as conversing with each other, loving each other and performing different acts, how can they help regarding them as different beings, different minds?" pp. 8, 9.

My object in *this* letter is not to controvert your creed; but to remark on your exposition of the doctrine of the Trinity, as stated, believed, and defended, by those with whom I am accustomed to think and act.

Admitting that you have given a fair account of our

belief; I cannot see, indeed, why we are not virtually guilty of Tritheism; or at least of something which approximates so near to it, that I acknowledge myself unable to make the distinction. But I cannot help feeling, that you have made neither an impartial, nor a correct statement of what we believe, or what we are accustomed to teach and defend.

It needs but a moderate acquaintance with the history of the doctrine in question, to satisfy any one, that a great variety of explanations have been attempted by inquisitive, or by adventurous minds. All acknowledge the difficulty of the subject; I regret to say, that all have not refrained from treating it, as though it were more within their comprehension than it is.

But among all the different explanations, which I have found, I have not met with any one which denied, or at least was designed to deny, the UNITY OF GOD. All admit this to be a fundamental principle. All acknowledge that it is designated in characters of light, both in the Jewish and Christian revelations; and that to deny it would be the grossest absurdity, as well as impiety.

It may, indeed, be questioned, whether the explanations given of the doctrine of the Trinity, by some, who have speculated on this subject, are consistent with the divine unity, when the language which they use is fairly interpreted, agreeably to the common laws of exegesis. But that their representations were not *designed* to call in question the *divine Unity*, is what I think every candid reader of their works will be disposed to admit.

Now when I consider this fact, so plain and so easily established; and then look through your statement of the doctrine of the Unity of God, and the Trinity, as given above; I confess it gives me pain, to think that you have

not conceded or even intimated, that Trinitarians do, or can, admit the Unity of God. You have a right to say, if you so think, that the doctrine of the Trinity, as they explain and defend it, is at variance with the *divine Unity*; and that they are inconsistent with each other. But to appropriate solely to those, who call themselves Unitarians, the belief that there is but one God; or to construct an account of the Trinitarian creed, (as it seems to me you have done, in the paragraph on which I am remarking,) so as not even to intimate to your hearers or readers, that your opponents admit, or advocate the *divine Unity*; is doing that which you would censure in an antagonist, and which cannot well subserve the interests of inquiry after truth.

But let us examine your statement of our creed:—

“We object to the doctrine of the Trinity, that it subverts the unity of God. According to this doctrine, there are three infinite and equal persons, possessing supreme divinity, called the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Each of these persons, as described by theologians, has his own particular consciousness, will, and perceptions. They love each other, converse with each other, and delight in each other’s society. They perform different parts in man’s redemption, each having his appropriate office, and neither doing the work of the other. The Son is mediator, and not the Father. The Father sends the Son, and is not himself sent; nor is he conscious, like the Son, of taking flesh. Here then we have three intelligent agents, possessed of different consciousnesses, different wills, and different perceptions, performing different acts, and sustaining different relations; and if these things do not imply and constitute three minds or beings, we are utterly at a loss to know how three minds or beings are to be formed.” p. 9.

Is not this account a very different one, from that which many of your brethren are accustomed to give of us?—By them it is said, that there is a great variety of discordant and contradictory statements and explanations of the doctrine of the Trinity, among those who embrace it. Do not you amalgamate us all together; make us

harmonious Tritheists, and then dismiss us to the reproach of Tritheism, or at least of glaring inconsistency?

After all; the statement, which you exhibit of our views, is very far from that which we, (or at least all Trinitarians with whom I am acquainted,) should make of our belief. I do not deny, that *some* writers on this subject have given reason, to make a statement not very diverse from yours, as it regards the explication of the Trinity. Some great and good men, in their zeal to defend this doctrine, have sought to reduce the whole subject to human comprehension. How vain the attempt experience has demonstrated. Efforts of this nature, however well designed, or ably conducted, never yet have led to any thing but greater darkness. "Who can by searching find out God? Who can find out the Almighty to perfection?"

But though I readily admit, that efforts to explain what in the nature of the case is inexplicable, may have misled some in their efforts to acquire religious knowledge, or given occasion to others of stumbling; yet I am not prepared to admit, that the great body of Trinitarians have given just occasion to charge them with a denial of the *Unity of God*, or with an opinion subversive of this. You certainly ought not to deny them the same liberty, in the use of terms to express their ideas, which all men take on every subject that is difficult, and for the accurate expression of which language is not framed, perhaps is not even adequate. They must approach such subjects by the use of figurative language; by the use of terms, which, if I may be indulged the liberty of thus expressing myself, *approximate* as nearly to it, as any that they can select. If there is any obscurity in these gen-

eral observations, I hope it will be cleared up in the remarks that are to follow.

Since I refuse assent to your statement of our belief, you will feel a right to inquire what we do believe, that you may compare this with the doctrine of **divine** Unity, and judge for yourself, whether it is subversive of it, or not. I cannot refuse my assent to so reasonable a proposal ; nor do I feel any inclination to shrink from the task, with the excuse that every thing respecting the subject is too mysterious and recondite, to be the object of distinct contemplation. What we do believe can be stated ; what we do *not* profess to explain or define can be stated, and the reasons why we do not ; and this is what I shall now attempt.

I must not, however, be understood as pledging in general those with whom I am accustomed to think and act, as adopting my statement, and maintaining that it pursues the best method of explaining or defending the great doctrine in question. Notwithstanding we are so often charged with adherence to forms and modes of expression contained in creeds, there is as much liberty taken among us, as to variety of method in giving instruction with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity, as the other doctrines of religion. I can only say, in respect to the statement which I shall make, that it is not the result of concert in any degree with clerical brethren who accord in my general views of religious doctrines, for the purpose of making a statement to which they will adhere. It is the result of investigation and reflection on the subject, as it appears to be developed in the Scriptures, and in the writings of the leading divines, whom I have been able to consult.

I believe, then,

I. That God is ONE ; *numerically one*, in essence and attributes. In other words, the infinitely perfect Spirit, the creator and preserver of all things, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, has numerically the same essence, and the same perfections, so far as we know any thing of them, which can be the subject of affirmation. To particularize ; the Son possesses not simply a similar or equal essence and perfections, but *numerically the same* as the Father, without division, and without multiplication.

II. The Son, (and so the Holy Spirit,) does in some respect *truly* and *really*, not merely nominally or logically, differ from the Father.

I am aware, as I have hinted above, that you may find writers upon the doctrine of the Trinity, who have stated the subject of my first proposition, in a manner somewhat different. But after making due allowances, for inattention to precision of language, the difficulty of the subject, and the various ways which men naturally take to illustrate a difficult subject, I am not aware that many of them would dissent, substantially, from the statement now made. Certain it is, that the Lutheran Confession exhibits the same view. The words are ; “ The divine essence is ONE, which is called and is God, eternal, incorporeal, indivisible ; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness ; the Creator and Preserver of all things, visible and invisible.*

The Confession of Helvetia (written A. D. 1566,) declares, that “ God is ONE in essence or nature, subsisting by himself, all sufficient in himself, invisible, without a body, infinite, eternal, the Creator of all things visible

* Una est essentia divina, quæ appellatur et est Deus, æternus, incorporeus, impartibilis ; immensa potentia, sapientia, bonitate ; Creator et Conservator omnium rerum visibilium, et invisibilium. (ART. I.)

and invisible, &c." It adds, "we detest the multitude of gods, because it is expressly written, The Lord thy God is one God, &c."

The Confession of Basil (A. D. 1532) declares, that there is "ONE eternal, almighty God, in essence and substance, and *not three gods*."

The Confession of the Waldenses states, that the Holy Trinity, "is in essence one only true, *alone*, eternal, almighty, and incomprehensible God, of ONE equal *indivisible* essence."

The French Confession (A. D. 1566) says, "We believe and acknowledge ONE *only* God, who is ONE *only* and simple essence, spiritual, eternal, invisible, immutable, infinite, &c."

The English Confession (A. D. 1562) states, that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, "be of ONE power, of ONE majesty, of ONE eternity, of ONE Godhead, and ONE substance. And although these three persons be so divided, that neither the Father is the Son, nor the Son is the Holy Ghost, nor the Father; yet nevertheless, we believe that there is but ONE very God."

The Confession of Belgia (A. D. 1566) declares, that "There is ONE *only* simple and spiritual essence, which we call God, eternal, incomprehensible, invisible, immutable, infinite, &c."

The articles of the English, episcopal church declare, that "there is but ONE living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions, &c."

The Confession of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands, revised at the Synod of Dort, (A. D. 1618—1619) declares, "We believe that there is ONE *only* and simple, spiritual Being, which we call God; and that he is eternal, incomprehensible, invisible, immutable, infinite, &c." (Vide Harmony of Confessions.)

With these agrees the Westminster Confession, approved by the general Assembly of Divines in A.D. 1647, adopted by all the Presbyterian churches in Great Britain and America, and assented to by a great part of the Congregational churches in New England. Its words are; "There is but *one only* living and true God, who is infinite in being and perfection, a pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, &c." [West. Con. p. 32.]

Now is this the denial of the divine *unity*, with which we are implicitly charged? Can Unitarians present a different, or more complete description of the divine unity, than these Symbols, of the different denominations of those who admit the doctrine of the Trinity, present?

But admitting our statement of the divine Unity to be correct; you will aver, probably, that my second proposition is subversive of the first. And this is what I shall now endeavour to investigate.

The common language of the Trinitarian Symbols is; "*That there are three PERSONS in the Godhead.*" In your comments upon this, you have all along explained the word *person*, just as though it were a given point, that we use the term here in its *ordinary* acceptation as applied to *men*. But can you satisfy yourself that this is doing us justice? What is plainer in Church History, than that the word *person* was introduced into the creeds of ancient times, merely as a term which would express the disagreement of Christians in general, with the reputed errors of the Sabellians, and others of similar sentiments, who denied the existence of any *real distinction* in the Godhead, and asserted that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were merely *attributes* of God, or the names of

different ways in which he revealed himself to mankind, or of different relations which he bore to them, and in which he acted? The Nicene Fathers meant to deny the correctness of this statement, when they used the word *person*, by implying that there was some *real*, not merely *nominal* distinction in the Godhead; and that something more than a diversity of relation or action in respect to us, was intended. They used the word *person*, because they supposed it approximated nearer to designating the existence of a *real distinction*, than any other which they could choose. Most certainly, neither they, nor any intelligent Trinitarian could use this term, in such a latitude as you represent us as doing, and as you attach to it. We profess to use it, merely from the poverty of language; merely to designate our belief of a real distinction in the Godhead; and not to describe independent, conscious beings, possessing *separate* and *equal essences*, and *perfections*. Why should we be obliged so often to explain ourselves on this point? Is there any more difficulty here, or any thing more obnoxious, than when you say, "God is angry with the wicked every day?" You defend yourself in the use of such an expression, by saying, that it is only the language of *approximation*; that it is intended to describe that in the mind of the Deity, or in his actions, which corresponds in some measure, or in some respect, to anger in men; not that he really feels the passion of anger.—You will permit me, then, to add, that we speak of *persons* in the Godhead, to designate that which in some respect or other corresponds to *person* as applied to men, i. e. *some distinction*; not that we attach to it the meaning of three beings, with a separate consciousness, will, omnipotence, omniscience, &c. Where is then, our inconsistency in

this, or the absurdity of our language ; provided there is a real foundation in the Scriptures, on which we may rest the *fact* of a distinction, that we believe to exist ?

I could heartily wish, indeed, that the word *person* never had come into the Symbols of the Churches, because it has been the occasion of so much unnecessary dispute and difficulty. But since it is in common use, it is difficult, perhaps impossible, altogether to reject it. If it must be retained, I readily concede that the use of it ought to be so guarded, as not to lead Christians in general into erroneous ideas of God. Nor can I suppose that Christians generally have such ideas, or understand it to mean what you attribute to our belief. Then surely it is not the best mode of convincing your opponents, to take the word in a sense so different from that in which they understand it, and charge them with the absurdities consequent upon the language of their creed. It has always been a conceded point, that in the discussion of difficult subjects, or the statement of them, terms might be used aside from their ordinary import. And, what can teach us in a plainer manner, that Trinitarians do use the word *person* in this way, than that they agree that *God is one*, in essence and in attributes ?

It might have been justly expected, likewise, that before they were charged with subverting the divine Unity, the meaning of the word *person*, should have been carefully investigated, in the ancient records which describe its first introduction into the Symbols of the Church. One of your rules of exegesis, to which I have with all my heart assented, demands that "every word should be modified and explained, according to the *subject* which is discussed, according to the *PURPOSES*, feelings, *circumstances* and principles of the writer." Do us

the justice to apply this law of interpretation to our language, and the dispute between us about the meaning of *person* is forever at an end.

What is then, you doubtless will ask, that distinction in the Godhead, which the word *person* is meant to designate? I answer without hesitation, that I do not know. The *fact* that a distinction exists, is what we aver; the definition of that distinction is what I shall by no means attempt. By what shall I, or can I define it? What simile drawn from created objects, which are necessarily derived and dependent, can illustrate the mode of existence in that Being, who is underived, independent, unchangeable, infinite, eternal? I confess myself unable to advance a single step here, in the explanation of what the distinction is. *I receive the FACT that it exists, simply because I believe that the Scriptures reveal the FACT.* And if the Scriptures do reveal the fact, that there are three *persons*, (in the sense explained,) in the Godhead; that there is a distinction on which are founded the appellations of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; which lays the foundation for saying, with propriety, *I, Thou, He*; for to speak of *sending and being sent*; of *being with God*, of *being in his bosom*, and other things of the like nature; and yet that the divine nature is equally predicable of each; then it is, like every other fact revealed, to be received simply on the credit of divine revelation.

Is there any more difficulty in understanding the fact, that there is a distinction in the Godhead, (the existence of which we are required to believe, and on which are founded some of the most interesting and delightful exhibitions of the divine character, although we cannot tell in what the distinction consists, or in other words, cannot define it,) than there is in believing that God

possesses an underived existence? With what shall we compare such an existence? All other beings are *derived*; and, of course, there is no object in the universe with which it can be compared. To define it then, is beyond our reach. We can approximate towards a conception of it, merely by negatives. We deny that the divine existence has any author, or cause; and when we have done this, we have not defined it, but simply said that a certain thing *does not* belong to it. Here we must rest; and archangels, probably, cannot proceed beyond this.

Now in regard to the distinction in the Godhead, which we believe to exist; we say, *It is not a mere distinction of attributes which are known to us, of relation to us, of modes of action, or of relation between any known attributes and substance or essence.* We believe the Scriptures justify us in these *negations*. But *here* we leave the subject. We undertake (at least the Trinitarians of our country with whom I am acquainted undertake,) not at all to describe *affirmatively*, the distinction in the Godhead. When you will give me an affirmative description of underived existence, I will engage to furnish you with one of *person* in the Trinity. You do not reject the belief of self existence, merely because you cannot *affirmatively define* it; neither do we of a distinction in the Godhead, because we cannot *affirmatively define* it.

What is the *eternity* of God? You answer by telling me, that there never was a time, and never will be one, in which he did not exist. True; but then, what was *time*, before the planetary system, which measures it, had an existence? And what will *time* be, when these heavens and this earth shall be blotted out? Besides,

passing over this difficulty about time, you have only given a negative description of God's eternity; you deny certain things of him, and then aver that he is *eternal*. Yet because you cannot affirmatively describe eternity, you would not reject the belief of the fact that God is *eternal*. Why should I reject the belief of a distinction in the Godhead, because I cannot affirmatively define it?

I do not feel therefore, that we are exposed justly to be taxed with mysticism, and absurdity, when we admit that there is a distinction in the Godhead, which we feel utterly unable to define. I am aware, indeed, that a writer some time since composed, and published in the periodical work then edited at Cambridge, a piece in which he laboured with no small degree of ability and acuteness, to show that no man can believe a proposition, the terms of which are unintelligible, or which he does not understand; and then applied the subject to convince those who believe in the doctrine of the Trinity of absurdity. But it seems to me, the whole argument of that piece is founded on a confusion of two things, which are in themselves very diverse; viz., terms which are *unintelligible*, and things which are *undefinable*. You believe in the fact that the divine existence is without cause; you understand the fact, that God exists uncaused; but you cannot define underived existence. I believe, on the authority of the Scriptures, that there is a real distinction in the Godhead; but I cannot define it. Still the proposition that there is a *real distinction* is just as intelligible, as the one that God is self-existent. A multitude of propositions respecting many diverse subjects, resemble these. We affirm that gravitation brings a body thrown into the air, down to the earth. The fact is perfectly intelligible. The terms are perfectly under-

stood, so far as they are the means of designating this fact. But then, what is gravitation? An affirmative definition cannot be given, which is not a mere exchange of synonymes. Nor can any comparison define it; for to what shall we liken it?

The mind of every man, who is accustomed to think, will supply him with a multitude of propositions of this nature; in all of which the fact designed to be described is clear; the terms so far as they designate this fact are clear; but the subject of the proposition, that is the thing itself, or agent, concerning which the fact is asserted, is undefinable, and, excepting in regard to the fact in question, perhaps wholly unknown to us.

How easy now to perplex common minds, by calling a proposition unintelligible, the *subject* of which is *undefinable*. In confounding things so very different, consists as I apprehend, the whole ingenuity of the piece in question; an ingenuity, which may excite the admiration of those who love disceptatious subtilties, but cannot contribute much to illuminate the path of theological science.

I have been thus particular, in my statement of this very difficult part of the subject, in order to prevent misapprehension. I certainly do not hold myself bound to vindicate any of the definitions of *person*, or *distinction* in the Godhead, which I have seen, because I do not adopt them. I do not, and cannot understand them; and to a definition, I cannot with propriety assent, until I do understand what it signifies. I regret most sincerely to see, that some great and good men, have carried their speculations on this subject to such a length, that they have bewildered themselves and their readers. To present only a few of the ablest attempts to define

the *persons* of the Trinity, will illustrate and establish what I have just said.

Contrary to the very common and confident affirmations of many writers, that the terms *Trinity* and *person*, as applied to the Godhead, were the refinements of later ages, and scholastic divinity; I find them used at a period of the Church, not far distant from the Apostolic age. Tertullian, who flourished about A. D. 200, in *Libro adversus Praxeam*, c. 2, says, “This perversity, (viz. of Praxeas,) thinks itself to be in possession of mere truth, while it supposes that we are to believe in one God, not otherwise than if we make the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost the self same; as if all were not *one*, while all are of one, viz. by a unity of substance; and still, the mysterious economy which distributes unity into a TRINITY is observed, marking out [distinguishing] Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. There are three, not in condition, but rank; not in essence, but form; not in power, but in kind: but of *one* substance, *one* condition, and power; for there is *one* God, from whom all those ranks, and forms, and kinds by the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are reckoned.”

A little farther on he says, —“Whatever, therefore, the substance of the Word (*Logos*) is, I call him a PERSON, and pay him reverence; and acknowledging the Son, I maintain that he is *second* from the Father.

“The *third* is the Spirit from God and the Son, as the fruit from the stalk, is the third from the root; a rivulet from the river [the third] from the fountain; the sharp point from a ray [the third] from the sun. So the TRINITY proceeds, by interlinked and connected grades, from the Father.”

In Cap. 9, he says, “They (the Trinity) are not sep=

arate from each other, although the Father is said to be diverse from the Son, and the Spirit."

And again; "Each one of us is baptized into the PERSONS (of the Trinity) by particular [or distinct] names."*

So Origen, who flourished before Tertullian's death, (Com. in Johan. p. 24.) reprehends those "who do not attribute ὑποστασιν λογῶ, *person to the Word, or Logos*;" and shortly after adds, "τρεις ὑποσπασεις we acknowledge, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." I believe Tertullian is the earliest writer, who affords a decisive specimen of the technical use of the word *Trinity*, and *Person*. His object cannot be mistaken. His antagonist, Praxeas, denied that there existed any distinction in the Godhead; or at most, any except a verbal one. Tertullian means to assert the existence of a threefold distinction, for which he uses the word *Trini-*

* "Perversitas hæc, (sc. Praxeae,) se existimat meram veritatem possidere, dum unicum Deum non alias putat credendum, quam si ipsum eundemque et Patrem, et Filium, et Spiritum Sanctum dicat, quasi non sic quoque unus sit omnia, dum ex uno omnia, per *substantiæ* scilicet *unitatem* et nihilominus custodiatur οικονομίας sacramentum, quæ unitatem in TRINITATEM disponit; tres dirigens, Patrem, Filium, et Spiritum Sanctum. Tres autem non statu sed gradu; nec substantia sed forma; nec potestate sed specie: unius autem substantiæ, et status, et potestatis, quia unus Deus ex quo et gradus isti, et formæ, et species, in nomine Patrem, Filium, et Spiritum Sanctum deputantur."

—"quæcunque ergo, substantia Sermonis (του λογου) sit, illum dico PERSONAM et illi nomen vindico; et dum Filium agnosco, *secundum* a Patre defendo.—*Tertius* est *Spiritus* a Deo et Filio, sicut tertius a radice fructus ex frutice; a fonte rivus ex flumine; a solè apex ex radio. Ita TRINITAS per consertos et connexos gradus a Patre decurrit.

"—Inseparati tamen ab alterutro, etsi dicatur alium esse Patrem, alium Filium et Spiritum.

—"Ad singula Nomina, in personas singulas tingimur."

ty ; and to signify that this distinction is *real*, not *nominal*, he uses the word *person*.

But to explain Tertullian's similitudes, (so frequently copied in after ages,) is more than I shall undertake. Who does not see, that all similitudes drawn from created, limited, dependent beings or things, must be utterly inadequate to illustrate the mode in which an uncreated, infinite, and omnipresent Being exists?—What is the attempt, but to “darken counsel by words without knowledge?” I believe with Tertullian in a threefold distinction in the Godhead ; but I believe simply *the fact of a Trinity*, and do not venture to make any attempt at explanation.

Very little if any better than Tertullian, have succeeded the venerable Council of Nice, who designed in their Creed, to express their disagreement with the opinions of Arius. Their words are ; “We believe in one God, the Father, Almighty, the maker of all things visible and invisible ; and in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only begotten of the Father, that is of the substance of the Father ; God of God, light of light, very God of very God, begotten not made, of the same substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.”*

This Council (held A. D. 325,) believed in the eternal generation of the Son ; and meant to say, by the very peculiar phraseology which they have here exhibited,

* Πιστευομεν εις ένα Θεον, πατερα, παντοκρατορα, ποιητην ὁρατων τε παντων και αορατων· και εις ένα Κυριον Ιησουν Χριστον, τον υιον του Θεου, τον γεννηθεντα εκ του πατρος μονογενη, τουτ' εστι εκ της ουσιας του πατρος, δεον εκ δεου, φως εκ φωτος, δεον αληθινον εκ δεου αληθινου, γεννηθεντα ου ποιηθεντα, ὁμοουσιον τῷ πατρι, δι' ου τα παντα εγενετο.

that the essential distinction between the Father and the Son, consisted in the fact of his eternal generation. Arius affirmed that the Son was begotten in time; the Nicene Fathers, that his generation was eternal.

I am unable to conceive of a definite meaning in the terms, *eternal generation*; and I cannot regard them in any other light than as a solecism, a palpable contradiction of language. Nor can I understand the Nicene Creed, when it says that Christ was "*God of God, light of light, very God of very God.*" If there is *any* thing meant by all this, (and no doubt there is,) can it be more, than that there is and has from eternity been, a mysterious and indescribable connexion and discrimination between the Father and Son? I presume the Nicene Fathers *meant* to make out an *affirmative* or *positive* definition. That they have failed is sufficiently evident; but that they are guilty of *designed intrusion* into the mysteries of the Godhead, or of intending to introduce useless and unmeaning words into their Symbol, no person of candour, who examines thoroughly the history of their creed, will, I think, be led to believe.

The council of Constantinople, reckoned as the second ecumenical Council, (A. D. 381) in their Synodic address to the churches, say, that "it is the most ancient faith, and agreeable to baptism, to believe in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, so namely, that there is *one* divinity, power, and substance of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; who possess equal dignity, and coeternal dominion; who exist in three most perfect hypostases, or three perfect persons; so that the pest of Sabellius shall have no place, which confounds the persons, and takes away their appropriate qualities; nor the blasphemy of the Eunomians, Arians, and opposers of the Holy Spirit

prevail, which destroys the substance, and nature, and divinity of the uncreated, consubstantial, and coeternal Trinity, by introducing a posterior nature, of a different substance, and created.”* (*Theodoreti. Ecc. Hist. L.v. c. 9.*)

I cannot see how this explanation gives us any more light than the others.

Let us leave antiquity, and glance, for a moment, at some of the similar attempts in modern times. The celebrated Leibnitz, was requested by Loeffler, (who had undertaken to refute the writings of a certain English Antitrinitarian,) to give him an affirmative definition of the *persons* in the Godhead. He sent for answer the following; “Several persons in an absolute substance, numerically the same, signify several, particular, intelligent substances essentially related.”† On further consideration he abandoned this, and sent a second; which was, “Several persons in an absolute substance numerically the same, mean relative, incommunicable modes of subsisting.”‡

*—πιστευειν εις το ονομα του πατρος, του υιου, και του πνευματος αγιου, δηλαδη θεοτητος τε και δυναμεως και ουσιας μιας του πατρος, του υιου, και του πνευματος αγιου πιστενομενης, ομοτιμου τε της αξιας και συναιιδιου της βασιλειας εν τρισι τελειοταταις υποστασιν, ηγουν τρισι τελειοις προσωποις, ως μητε την Σαξελλιου νοσον χωραν λαβειν, συγχεομενων των υποστασεων, ηγουν ιδιοτητων αναιρουμενων; μητε την Ευνομιανων, Αρειανων, και Πνευματομαχων την βλασφημιαν ισχυειν, της ουσιας, η της φυσεως, η της θεοτητος τεμνομενης, και τη ακτιστη, και ομοουσιω, και συναιιδιω Τριαδι μεταγενεστερας τινος, η κτιστης, η ετεροουσιου φυσεως επαγομενης.

† Plures personæ in eadem numero substantia absoluta, significant plures substantias singulares, intelligentes, essentialiter relativas.

‡ Plures personæ in eadem numero substantia absoluta, intelliguntur per modos subsistendi relativos, incommunicabiles.

If Leibnitz actually understood this, he must have been a better master of metaphysics, than any person who has ever read his definition. In fact he does not himself appear to have been satisfied with his own definition; for not long after, he wrote as follows; "We must say, that there are relations in the Divine Substance, which distinguish the *persons*, since these persons cannot be absolute substances. But we must aver, too, that these relations are substantial. At least, we must say, that the Divine Persons are not the same Concrete, under different denominations or relations; as a man may be, at the same time, both a poet and an orator. We must say, moreover, that the three persons are not as absolute substances as the whole."*

This is somewhat better than either of his former attempts, in as much as it is confined principally to description of a negative kind. Yet after all, I see no light cast upon the subject, which is of any real importance.

With quite as little success, did that original genius and masterly reasoner, the celebrated Toellner of Frankfort, labour to define the subject in question. "It is certain," says he, "that we must conceive, as coexisting in God, three eternal and really different actions, the action of activity, of idea, and of the desire of all possible good within and without him. Three really different actions, coexisting from eternity, necessarily presuppose three really different and operative substrata. It is thus, through the aid of reason illuminated by the Scriptures, we come to know, that the Power, the Understanding, and the Will of God are not merely three faculties, but three distinct energies, that is, three substances."†

* Remarques sur le livre d' un Antitrinitaire Anglois, p. 26.

† Es ist gewiss, dass wir uns in Gott drey ewige wahrhaftig von

Tertullian's explication, or the Nicene Creed is, at least, as intelligible to me as this.

I will produce but one instance more ; which is that of the celebrated Lessing. "Must not God," says he, "have the most perfect idea of himself? That is, an idea in which every thing is comprised, that is comprised in himself. Could this however be the case, if, in the same manner as of his other attributes, there should be merely an idea, merely a possibility of his necessary activity? This possibility comprises the being of his other attributes ; but can it exhaust his necessary activity? Consequently, God can either have no perfect idea of himself; or this perfect idea is necessarily active, as he himself is."*

If there be any proof here of more than one person

einander unterschiedene Handlungen neben einander, gedenken müssen ; die Handlung des Wirkens, der Vorstellung, und des Begehrens alles möglichen Guten in und ausser ihm.

Drey wahrhaftig verschiedene Handlungen, zugleich von Ewigkeit her neben einander, erfordern auch von Ewigkeit her drey von einander wahrhaftig verschiedene handelnde Gruende. Und so verkennen wir mit der durch die Schrift erwekten Vernunft, dass die Kraft, der Verstand, und der Wille in Gott nicht drey blossе Vermöegen, sondern drey von einander verschiedene Kräfte, das ist drey Substanzen sind. [*Vermischte Aufsätze. B. i. p. 81. edit. 1769.*]

* Muss Gott nicht die vollstaendigste Vorstellung von sich selbst haben? d. i. eine Vorstellung in der sich alles befindet, was in ihm selbst ist. Würde sich aber alles in ihr finden was in ihm selbst ist, wenn auch von seiner nothwendigen Wirklichkeit, so wie von seinen uebrigen Eigenschaften, sich bloss eine Vorstellung, sich bloss eine Möglichkeit faende? Diese Möglichkeit erschöpft das Wesen seiner uebrigen Eigenschaften : aber auch seiner nothwendigen Wirklichkeit? Folglich, kann entweder Gott gar keine vollstaendige Vorstellung von sich selbst haben ; oder diese Vorstellung ist eben so nothwendig wirklich, als er selbst ist. (*Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts. 1785. p. 68.*)

in God, it is one which may prove there is ten, or twenty. And if Lessing himself understood his own description, I shall not hazard much in declaring my belief, that he was the only man who has been able to do it.

I have not produced these instances, in order to satisfy you that all attempts of this nature are and must be fruitless. You doubtless need no such proof. I have produced them for two reasons; the first, to justify myself, in some good measure, for not attempting a definition, in which no one has yet succeeded: the second, to show that notwithstanding all the fruitless attempts at definition, which have been made, and notwithstanding the variety of method in which men have chosen to make these attempts; yet, *for substance*, there is a far greater unanimity of opinion among Trinitarians, than you and your friends are willing to concede. I grant freely, that there is a great variety, in the mode by which an attempt at definition or illustration is made. I do most sincerely regret, that any such attempts ever were made. But I cannot, for the most part, accuse them of any ill design; much less spurn at them with contempt.

Patient investigation and candor will lead one to believe, as it seems to me, that the *thing aimed at was, in substance, to assert the idea of a distinction in the Godhead*. To do this with the more success, (as they imagined,) they endeavoured to describe *affirmatively* the nature of that distinction. Here they have all failed. But does this prove, that there is actually a great variety of opinion among Trinitarians, in regard to the principal thing concerned, merely because there is a great variety of attempts at illustration? I cannot help feeling that this matter is sometimes misrepresented, and very generally but little understood.

And now, can you by arguments *a priori*, prove to me that the doctrine of the Trinity must be untrue, because it is inconsistent with itself, or “subversive of the doctrine of divine Unity?”—We say the divine essence and attributes are *numerically one*; but that there is a *real distinction* in the Godhead between the Father and the Son. (I omit the consideration of the Holy Spirit here, because your Sermon merely hints at this subject, and all difficulties in respect to the doctrine of the Trinity, are essentially connected with proving or disproving the Divinity of Christ.) *We abjure all attempts to define that distinction; we admit it simply as a fact, on the authority of divine Revelation.* Now how can you prove that a distinction does not exist, unless you can tell us what it is? The want of evidence in the Scriptures to establish the fact, would be a sufficient reason for rejecting it, I acknowledge. But we are now making out a statement of the subject, and answering objections that are urged, independently of the Scriptures. The proof which the New Testament exhibits, we are hereafter to examine. How then, I repeat it, are you to show that we believe in a self-contradiction, or in an impossibility? If the distinction in question cannot be proved, independently of the Scriptures, (and most freely I acknowledge it cannot;) it is equally certain that it cannot be disproved. In order to know that this distinction contradicts the Divine Unity, you must be able to tell what it is, and what the divine Unity is? Can you do either?

Allow me, for a moment, to dwell on the subject now casually introduced. It is a clear point, I think, that the unity of God cannot be proved, without revelation. It may perhaps be rendered faintly probable. Then you depend on Scripture proof, for the establishment

of this doctrine. But have the Scriptures any where told us what the *divine Unity* is? Will you produce me the passage? The *oneness* of God they assert. But this assertion is always in opposition to the idols of the heathen—the polytheism of the Gentiles—the gods superior and inferior, which they worshipped. In no other sense, have the Scriptures defined the *ONE-NESS* of the Deity. What then is *Oneness*, in the uncreated, infinite, eternal Being? In created and finite objects, we have a distinct perception of what we mean by it; but can *created* objects be just and adequate representatives of the *uncreated ONE*? Familiar as the assertion is in your conversation, and in your Sermons, that God is *ONE*, can you give me any other definition of this *oneness*, except a negative one? That is, you deny plurality of it; and say God is but one, and not two, or more. Still, in what, I ask, does the *divine Unity* consist? Has not God different and various faculties, and powers? Is he not almighty, omniscient, omnipresent, holy, just, and good? Does he not act differently, i. e. variously, in the natural, and in the moral world? Does his unity consist, then, appropriately in his essence? But what is the essence of God? And how can you assert that his unity consists appropriately in this, unless you know what his essence is, and whether oneness can be any better predicated of this, than of his attributes?

Your answer to all this is; The nature of God is beyond my reach; I cannot define it. I approach to a definition of the divine unity, only by negatives. Our answer to Unitarians is, We do not profess to understand what the distinction in the Godhead is; we approach the definition of it only by negatives. How does our case differ in principle from yours?

And in respect to the evidences of the Divine Unity in the New Testament ; I allow they are sufficient. But I will merely suggest, here, that I am fully persuaded, *the passages asserting it are fewer in number, than the passages which assert or imply that Christ is truly divine.* I cannot but think the frequent and common assertions of of your Sermon and of Unitarians in general, with regard to this subject, are very erroneous ; that they are made at hazard, and without a diligent and faithful comparison of the number of texts that respect the divine Unity in the New Testament, and those which concern the divinity of the Saviour. After all ; to what purpose is it, that so great a multitude of texts should be required, by those who believe, as you do, that the decisions of the Scriptures are of divine authority ? The decision of one text, fairly made out by the laws of exegesis, is as authoritative as that of a thousand. Would a law a thousand times repeated, have any more authority attached to it for the repetition ? It might be better explained by the repetition in different connexions ; but its *authority* is simply one and uniform.

But, to return from this digression ; Suppose I should affirm that the subjects A and B are *numerically* identical in regard to X, but diverse or distinct with regard to Y ? I hope I shall not be subjected to the imputation, of endeavoring to prove the doctrine of the Trinity by the science of Algebra ; for my only object in making this statement is, to illustrate my answer to a very common question, which Unitarians put us ; “ How can three be one, and one three ? ” In no way, I answer, necessarily and cheerfully. “ How then is the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity to be vindicated ? ” Just as well as though these questions had never been devised. *We do*

not maintain that the Godhead is three in the same respects that it is one, but the reverse. In regard to X, we maintain its numerical unity; in regard to Y we maintain a threefold distinction; we maintain *simply the fact that there is such a distinction, on Scripture authority.* We do not profess to understand in what it consists.

Now, Sir, will you not allow that we have some reason to complain, that from the time in which Tertullian maintained the doctrine of the Trinity against Praxeas, down to the present hour, the views and statements of Trinitarians, in regard to this subject, should have been so frequently misunderstood, or misrepresented?

I will dwell no longer on my statement of the doctrine of the Trinity, and of the difficulties that lie in the way of proving this statement to be erroneous or contradictory; except to mention, in a brief way, two of the most formidable objections to it that I have seen, which were adduced by two men, who must be reckoned among the most intelligent, that have embraced the cause of Unitarianism. The first is from Faustus Socinus, and runs thus:

“No one is so stupid, as not to see that these things are contradictory, that our God, the creator of heaven and earth should be *one only* in number, and yet be three, each of which is our God. For as to what they affirm, that our God is one in number, in respect to his essence, but threefold in regard to persons; here again they affirm things which are self-contradictory, since two, or three persons cannot exist, where there is an individual essence numerically one; for to constitute more than one person, more than one individual essence is required. For what is person, but a certain individual, intelligent essence? Or in what way, I pray, does one person dif-

fer from another, unless by a diversity of individual essence, or of that which is numerically one?—This implies, that the divine essence, is numerically *one* only, yet that there is more than one person; although the Divine essence which is numerically one, and divine person are altogether identical.”* (Opp. tom. i. p. 697.)

Here, however, it is obvious that the whole weight of the objection lies in an erroneous use of the words *person* and *essence*. Socinus attaches to them a sense which Trinitarians do not admit. How then can Trinitarians be charged with inconsistencies in propositions, which propositions they never made?

Of the same tenor with this, is the objection mentioned by the famous Toellner, (Theolog. Untersuchungen, B. I. p. 29,) which, to save the room, I shall merely translate, without subjoining the original. “The most considerable objection,” says he, “(against the doctrine of the Trinity,) is this; that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are each a particular substance endowed with understanding; and at the same time, neither of them is said to have his separate being, his separate understand-

* Nemo est tam stolidus, qui non videat, pugnare hæc inter se, illum Deum nostrum coeli terraeque creatorem esse unum tantum in numero, et tamen tres esse, quorum unusquisque sit ille Deus noster. Nam quod aiunt, unum quidem esse numero Deum, sed ratione essentiae, trinum vero ratione personarum; rursus hic sibi invicem repugnantia loquuntur, cum tres vel etiam duae personae esse nequeant, ubi est una tantum numero sive individua essentia, et ad plures una persona constituendas plures etiam una individua essentiae requirantur. Nam quid aliud persona est, quam quaedam individua intelligens essentia? Aut qua potissimum ratione diversa est persona alia ab alia, nisi diversitate individuae sive unius numero essentiae?.....Implicat Divinam essentiam unam tantum numero esse, non tamen unam tantum esse divinam personam, sed plures, cum divina essentia numero una, et divina persona idem omnino reape sint.

ing, his separate will, his separate power of action; but all three together have but one being, one understanding, one will, one power of action. As it appears then, it is affirmed that there are three real beings truly separate, each consequently having his own individual power of action and not having it; three *separate* persons, and three persons *not separate*."

All the difficulty, which this masterly writer, in his usual way, has so strikingly represented, lies merely in the representations of those Trinitarians, who have so incautiously expressed themselves on this subject, as to be understood as affirming, that there are three separate beings, (persons in the *common* sense of the word,) in the Godhead, with distinct powers, volitions, &c. Such, (if there be any now, for I profess I do not know any,) I leave to compose the difficulty with Toellner as they can. I have only a single remark to make; which is, that the view of the doctrine of the Trinity given by Toellner is not that which I have presented, or which I should ever undertake to defend. Of course it cannot be adduced as an objection, against the view which I have given, and have undertaken to advocate.

The second objection appears, at first view, more formidable and perplexing. It comes from Taylor, and was inserted in the English Theological Magazine, Vol. I. No. 4. p. 111. (1770.) I have not opportunity of access to the original, and take the ideas from a Latin translation of the piece, which was published in Germany.

"There can," says Taylor, "be no real distinction between the Father and the Son, unless they so differ from each other, that what is peculiar to the Father, is wanting in the Son; and what is peculiar to the Son, is wanting in the Father. Now that property which be-

longs exclusively to the Father, or the Son, must be numbered among the perfections of God; for in the divine nature no imperfections can exist. It follows then, that some perfection is lacking, both in the Father and in the Son, so that neither is endowed with infinite perfection, which is essential to the divine nature. It must be conceded then, that the essence of the Father and the Son are not one and the same."

Ingenious and specious as this is, still I am unable to see that it settles the point in debate. The moral attributes and perfections of God are numerically one, as we have already admitted. If by *perfection* in the case above, Taylor means *all* which belongs to the Godhead; then I answer merely by saying, It is essential to the perfection of the Godhead, that the distinction of Father and Son should exist, and that destitute of this, there would be imperfection. My right to make such a statement is just the same as that of his in making the assertion, that the distinction between Father and Son, involved an imperfection in each. The very fact of Paternity, and Sonship, (not literal,) make up the perfection of the Father as Father; and of the Son as Son; and did not these exist, something would be wanting to complete the perfection of the Godhead. I acknowledge this is assumption; but so is Taylor's statement: and an argument which is built on one assumption may surely be opposed by another.

My object thus far, in this letter, has been to compare our views of the Trinity with those which you have ascribed to us; and to show that we are not justly exposed to be charged with gross and palpable absurdity, or of "subverting the Unity of the Godhead;" and that the question, after all, whether there is a distinction in

the Godhead, must be referred solely to the decision of the Scriptures.

To them I shall appeal, as soon as I have made a few remarks on the subject of the twofold nature, which we ascribe to Christ. You say (p. 11,) "We (Unitarians) believe in the *unity of Jesus Christ*. We believe that Jesus is one mind, one soul, one being, as truly one as we are, and equally distinct from the one God. We complain of the doctrine of the Trinity, that not satisfied with making God three beings, it makes Jesus Christ two beings, and thus introduces infinite confusion into our conceptions of his character. This corruption of Christianity, alike repugnant to common sense, and to the general strain of Scripture, is a remarkable proof of the power of a false philosophy in disfiguring the simple truth of Jesus."

You will admit that this is expressed in terms of strong confidence, and with no small degree of severity. Whether you have so clear a right to the first, and whether we are really deserving of the last, every lover of the truth will permit to be brought to the test of examination.

I am not certain, that I have rightly apprehended your meaning, when you say that the twofold nature of Christ is "*repugnant to common sense*." Do you mean, that common sense may determine first, independently of Revelation, that the doctrine cannot be true; and then maintain the impossibility that Revelation should contain it? If so, then surely we do not need a Revelation to teach us truths, which we are altogether capable of developing and asserting without one; for you will easily see, that in respect to any doctrine of Revelation whatever, every man might take the same liberty to decide,

that it could not be true, because he might aver, that it was contradictory to common sense.

The proper sphere of action for common sense, is limited to judging of the evidences that the Bible is of divine origin and authority; of the rules of exegesis, common to all languages and books; and finally in directing a fair and impartial application of those rules to determine what the original writer of any portion of the Scriptures designed to inculcate. Having once admitted, as you have, the divine authority of the Scriptures, in deciding all questions, when you can fairly come at the meaning of them, by using the common rules of interpretation; how is it to be decided by *common sense* whether Christ has two natures or one? Common sense may investigate the language of the inspired writers, and inquire what they have said; and if by the sound rules of interpretation, it should appear that they have affirmed of Christ that he has two natures; or asserted that which unavoidably leads to this conclusion; then it is either to be believed, or the authority of the writers is to be cast off. *Common sense* must act on this latter ground, in rejecting any doctrine which the language of Scripture plainly teaches. To receive the Bible as a revelation from God; and then to decide, *a priori*, what the Scriptures can, and what they cannot contain; and to make their language bend, until it conform with these decisions; cannot surely be a proper part for any sincere lover of truth and sober investigation.

In saying then, that the doctrine which teaches that Christ has two natures is "repugnant to common sense," I presume you must mean, that the rules of exegesis, applied by common sense, lead unavoidably to the conclusion that Christ has but one nature. If this be your

meaning, what I have to say in reply will be developed in the course of my next letter.

In regard to the impossibility that Christ should possess two natures, and the absurdity of such a supposition, I have not much to say. If the Scriptures are the word of God, and do contain the doctrine in question, it is neither impossible, nor absurd. Most certainly, if it be a fact that Christ possesses two natures, it is a fact with which natural religion has no concern; at least, of which it has no knowledge. It can therefore decide neither for, nor against it. It is purely a doctrine of Revelation; and to Scripture only can we look for evidences of it. If the doctrine be palpably absurd, and contradictory to reason, and yet it is found in the Bible, then reject the claims of the Bible to inspiration and truth. But if the laws of interpretation do not permit us to avoid the conclusion that it is found there; we cannot, with any consistency, admit that the Scriptures are of divine authority, and yet reject the doctrine.

How shall any man decide, *a priori*, that the doctrine cannot be true? Can we limit the omniscient and omnipotent God, by saying that the Son cannot be so united with the human nature, so "become flesh and dwell among us," that we recognize and distinguish in this complex being but one person, and therefore speak of but one? If you ask me how such a union can be effected between natures so infinitely diverse as the divine and human; I answer, (as in the case of the distinction in the Godhead,) I do not know *how* this is done; I do not undertake to define wherein that union consists, nor how it is effected. God cannot divest himself of his essential perfections, i. e. he is immutably perfect; nor could the human nature of Christ have been any more human nature, if it had ceased to be subject to the infirmi-

ties, and sorrows, and affections of human nature, while he dwelt among men. Whatever the union was then, it neither destroyed, nor essentially changed either the divine or human nature.

Hence, at one time, Christ is represented as the Creator of the Universe; and at another, as a man of sorrows, and of imperfect knowledge. (John i. 1—18.—Heb. i. 10—12.—Luke ii. 52.) If both of these accounts are true, he must, as it seems to me, be God omniscient and omnipotent; and still a feeble man and of imperfect knowledge. It is indeed impossible to reconcile these two things, without the supposition of two natures. The simple question then is; Can they be joined, or united, so that in speaking of them, we may say the person is God or man; or we may call him by one title, (which will leave us at liberty to understand as designated either or both of these natures,) i. e. Christ? On this subject, the religion of nature says nothing. Reason has nothing to say: for how can we decide, *a priori*, as to the possibility of that which is not self-contradictory?

One person, *in the sense in which each of us is one*, Christ could not be. If you make God the soul, and Jesus of Nazareth the body of Christ, then you take away his human nature, and you deny the imperfection of his knowledge. But may not God have been, in a manner altogether peculiar and mysterious, united to Jesus, without developing his whole power in him, or necessarily rendering him supremely perfect? In the act of creation, God does not put forth all his power; nor in preservation, nor in sanctification; nor all his knowledge when he inspires prophets and Apostles. Was it necessary that he should exert it all, when in conjunction with the human nature of Christ? In governing the world, from day to day, God does not surely exhaust his omnipotence

or his wisdom. He employs only so much, as is necessary to accomplish the design which he has in view. In his union with Jesus of Nazareth, the divine *Logos* could not, of course, be necessitated to put forth all his energy, or exhibit all his knowledge and wisdom, at once. Just so much of it, and no more, was manifested, as was requisite to constitute the character of an incarnate Mediator and Redeemer. When necessary, power and authority infinitely above human were displayed; when otherwise, the human nature sympathized and suffered, like that of other men.

Is this impossible for God? Is there any thing here, which if it should be found in the Bible, would be an adequate reason for rejecting its claims to inspiration? For my own part I cannot see the impossibility, or the absurdity of such a thing. How shall we limit the Deity, as to the ways in which he is to reveal himself to his creatures?

Why are we not as great a mystery to ourselves, as we can find in the doctrine before us? We do not appropriate the affections of our minds to our bodies; nor those of our bodies to our minds. Each is separate and distinct. Yet we refer either class to the whole man. Abraham is dead; Abraham is living; are both equally true. Abraham had a mortal and an immortal part; both made one person. How is it a greater mystery, if I say, Christ was God; and Christ was man. He had a nature human and divine. One person indeed, in the sense in which Abraham was, he is not. Nor is there any created object, to which the union of Godhead with humanity can be compared. But shall we deny the possibility of it on this account? Or shall we tax with absurdity, that which is utterly beyond our reach to scan?

I shrink from such an undertaking, and place myself in the attitude of listening to what the voice of revelation may dictate, in regard to this. It *becomes* us here to do this; to prostrate ourselves before the Father of Lights, and say, Speak, Lord, for thy servants hear. Lord, what wilt thou have us to believe!

You may indeed find fault with us, that we speak of *three persons* in the Godhead, where there is but one nature; and yet of but *one person* in Christ, where there are two natures. I admit that it is an apparent inconsistency in the use of language; and sincerely regret that it ever was adopted. Still, it is capable of some explanation. In the first case, *person* simply designates the idea, that there is some real distinction in the Godhead, in opposition to the opinion that it is merely nominal. In the second, it designates Christ, as he appears to us in the New Testament, clothed with a human body, and yet acting (as we suppose,) not only as man, but as also possessing divine power. We see the attributes of human nature, in such intimate conjunction with those of the divine, that we cannot separate the agents; at least, we know not where to draw the line of separation, because we do not know the *manner* in which the union is effected, or continued. We speak therefore of one *person*—i. e. one agent. And when we say that the two natures of Christ are united in one person, we mean to say that Divinity and humanity are brought into such a connexion in this case, that we cannot separate them, so as to make two distinct and separate agents.

The present generation of Trinitarians, however, do not feel responsible for the introduction of such technical terms, in senses so variant from the common ideas attached to them. They merely take them as they find

them. For my own part, I have no attachment to them; I think them injudiciously chosen, and heartily wish they were by general consent entirely exploded. They certainly serve, in most cases, merely to keep up the form of words without definite ideas; and I fear, have been the occasion of many disputes in the Church. The *things* which are aimed at, by these terms, I would strenuously retain; because I believe in the divine origin and authority of the Bible, and that its language, fairly interpreted, does inculcate these things. And candor, on your part, will certainly admit, that *things only* are worth any dispute. Logomachy is too trifling for a lover of truth.



LETTER III.

Reverend and Dear Sir,

THUS far I have endeavoured to show, that the real question at issue between us, in regard to a distinction in the Godhead, and the divinity of the Saviour, cannot be decided, independently of the Scriptures. There is no such absurdity or inconsistency in either of these doctrines, as will justify us in rejecting them without investigation. The question whether they are true or not, belongs entirely and *purely* to Revelation. If you admit this; then the simple question between us is, what does Revelation say?—We are agreed that the Bible is the word of God; that whatever “Christ taught, either during his personal ministry, or by his inspired apostles, is of divine authority.” We are agreed in most things of any importance, as to our *principles* of interpretation. The principles by which all books are to be interpreted,

are those which apply to the interpretation of the Bible ; for the very plain reason which you have given, that when God condescends to speak and write, it is according to the established rules of human language. What better than an enigma would the Scriptures be, if such were not the case ? An *inspired interpreter* would be as necessary, as an inspired prophet or apostle was, first to compose the books of Scripture.

From this great and fundamental principle of all interpretation, it is easy to see, that the grammatical analysis of the words of any passage, i. e. an investigation of their meaning in general, of their syntactical connexion, of their idiom, of their relation to the context, and (of course,) of their *local* meaning, must be the essential process in determining the sense of any text or part of Scripture. These are the primary laws of interpretation in all the Classics, and in all other books ; laws which are uniform, and which cannot be violated without at once plunging into the dark and boundless field of conjectural exegesis. Whatever aid I may get from other sources, to throw light upon my text, it must be that which is superadded to the explanation that these rules will afford. These rules are founded simply in the fact, that every writer wishes and expects to be understood by his cotemporaries, and therefore uses language as they do. We presume this of the sacred writers ; and apply to them, as to the Classics, (excepting we allow for Hebrew-Greek idiom in the New Testament,) the common and universal rules of grammatical interpretation.

Admitting then the fundamental principles of grammatical interpretation, as the best and surest guide to the sense of any writer ; I can never supersede these by the introduction of any principles, which I may *suppose*

or *conjecture* to have influenced this writer. I am not to violate the obvious principles of grammatical interpretation, for the sake of saving any inconsistency, absurdity, or contradiction, in any author ; not even in any scriptural writer.

I must here explain myself, however, in order to prevent mistake in regard to my meaning. The Scriptures certainly stand on different ground, from that on which any other book rests, in regard to their claims upon our belief, that they are a Revelation from God. What other book can claim well authenticated miracles for its support ; or can exhibit prophetic declarations that have been fulfilled ; or can glory in such a development of the principles of piety and virtue—of love to God, and benevolence and beneficence to men ? Just in proportion then, as these evidences influence my mind to believe that the Bible is of divine origin, in the same proportion it becomes improbable to me that this Bible contains absurdities, errors, or contradictions. When any *apparent* error or contradiction attracts my attention, I hesitate to pronounce it such as it appears to be, because the evidences are so strong that the book is of divine original, I must do violence to my convictions to admit that the same book contains either what is erroneous or contradictory. I am slow then, to admit in any case such a sense to words in the Scriptures, as would make passages speak either absurdity or contradiction. But if there be any such ; and after all the light which I could gain, it should appear still to be a *plain case*, that there is an error in the sacred text ; then I must find a different reading ; or give up the passage ; or renounce the whole book. I may suspend an opinion while I live, as to *doubtful* cases. My convictions respecting the nature

and design of the Holy Scriptures ; the imperfection of my knowledge ; diffidence in myself—*demand* that I should act in this manner. But in any *clear* case ; where the meaning of a sacred writer,—what he did originally design to say, can be *definitely* and *plainly* made out by the common laws of interpretation ; and this meaning be erroneous, or contradict some other passage ; I have no right to put a constructive sense upon the words, and do violence to the passage to avoid any consequences, that may follow. I cannot honestly do it. The same common sense and reason, which prescribe the laws of exegesis, decide that the meaning of a writer must be that which those laws determine it to be. Of course, if I put a gloss upon any passage, which represents it as conveying a different meaning from that which the laws of interpretation would assign to it, I may deceive others ; or I may subserve the interests of party : but I violate the reason which God has given me by such conduct, and act a part dishonest, and unworthy of an inquirer after truth.

If the fundamental maxims of exegesis lead to the belief, that a writer of the New Testament has contradicted himself, or another sacred writer ; then I must revert at once to the question, Is the book divine ? Can it be so, if there is contradiction ? This question I may settle (on my responsibility to God,) as I please. But I have no right to violate the fundamental rules of language, by forcing a meaning upon the writer to make him consistent, which it is obvious, on the universal principles of explaining language, he never had. In determining the question whether the writers of the New Testament were inspired, I must always, (in attending to the internal evidence of the books,) consider whether they have contradicted each other. In determining this, the simple

rules of grammatical exegesis can never be violated. I must read this book, as I do all other books. Then, if there be contradiction, I reject its claims. If not, and I think the whole evidence is sufficient, I admit them. But at any subsequent period to this, when I have admitted them, I am at no liberty to aver, that the writers never could have taught some particular principle, which I dislike; and therefore do violence to the rules of grammatical interpretation, in order to explain away any principle of this nature, which they seem to inculcate. My simple inquiry must be, what sentiment does the language of this or that passage, without violence or perversion of rule, convey? When this question is settled, (*philologically* not *philosophically*,) then I believe what is taught; or else I reject the claim of divine authority. What can my own theories and reasonings, as to absurdity or the contrary in any particular doctrine, avail, in determining whether a writer of the New Testament has taught this doctrine or not? My investigation must be conducted independently of my *philosophy*, by my *philology*. Then, (when I have obtained his meaning by the simple and universal rules of expounding language,) I choose the course that I must take; I believe his assertion, or reject his authority.

If these be not sound and universal maxims of interpretation, I confess myself a stranger to the whole subject; nor can I help thinking that you will accord with me, at once, in the views that have been expressed.

Guided then by these principles, let us now come to the investigation of a few passages in the New Testament, which concern the point of the divine nature of Christ. I take this point, because you have dwelt most upon it; and because, very obviously, when this is admit-

ted or rejected, no possible objection can be felt to admitting or rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity.

You will not require of me, however, to examine at length every text of the New Testament, which I suppose to have any connexion with the subject in question. I must be permitted, in order to save time and patience, to select only such texts, whose language appears to be genuine, and above the condemnation of textual criticism; such as appear to me to contain the best and most decisive proof of the point in question. Believing the New Testament to be of divine origin and authority, you will permit me to add, that I cannot think the decision of any question depends on the number of times, in which the terms of that decision are repeated.

I observe then,

I. The New Testament gives to Christ the *appellation of God*, in such a manner, as that according to the fair rules of interpretation only the Supreme God can be meant.

A conspicuous passage in proof of this, I should find in John i. 1—3. *Εν αρχη ην ὁ Λογος, και ὁ Λογος ην προς τον Θεον, και Θεος ην ὁ Λογος. Οὗτος ην εν αρχη προς τον Θεον. Παντα δι' αυτου εγενετο και χωρις αυτου εγενετο ουδε εν, ὁ γεγονεν.* “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made, that was made.” Verse 10, . . . *και ὁ κοσμος δι' αυτου εγενετο*, “and the world was made by him.”

All known Manuscripts agree in the text here. Griesbach has indeed recorded, that for ὁ Θεος there is a conjectural reading, Θεον; and that for και Θεος, ην ὁ λογος, there is a conjectural reading of Θεος ην και

ὁ λόγος. The first of these conjectures was made by Crellius; (Initium Evang. Johan. restauratum per L. M. Artemonium, P. i. c. 1.) The reason of making such a conjecture Crellius has given. "The greater Christ is, compared with other gods, (the Father excepted,) the less can he be expressly called God, *lest he should be taken for the supreme God the Father.*" And again; "If he (Christ,) had been expressly called God by the sacred writers, and had not always been distinguished from God, *the sacred writers would have given an occasion for unskilful men, to regard him as the Supreme God.*" (Init. Evang. Johan. p. 295.) To liberate John from being taxed with this imprudence, Crellius proposed to substitute Θεοῦ for Θεός, in John i. 1.; so as to say, *the Logos was of God*, instead of saying, as John has done, that *He was God*.

The second conjectural reading is supported by equal authority. Bahrdt, (in Neuesten Offenbarungen,) proposed it as a happy expedient, to relieve the text from the difficulty and embarrassment, under which it now appeared to labour.

I have a great regard for the labours and learning of Griesbach; but I am constrained to ask here, why should he have condescended to notice conjectures so gratuitous, and unfounded (not to say improbable,) as these?

I proceed to the explanation of the text. *Εν αρχῇ*, corresponds exactly with the Hebrew בראשית, Gen. i. 1. I cannot embrace the opinion of those critics who think that the phrase *εν αρχῇ* of itself *simply*, signifies from eternity. Although I believe that the *Logos* did exist from eternity, I do not think it is proved directly by this expression. (Compare Gen. i. 1.) That *existence from eternity is implied*, however, may be properly admitted. *Εν αρχῇ* is equivalent to *εν αρχῇ κοσμου*, in the beginning of the world, i. e. before the world was made; and

so agreeing in sense with the phrase John xvii. 5, "the glory that I had with thee before the world was;" and Eph. i. 4., "before the foundation of the world." To say with Crellius, that by *αρχη* is meant the *commencement* of preaching the gospel, or the beginning of Christian instruction, would be making John gravely tell us, that before the *Logos* preached the gospel, he had an existence.

Before the world was created then, the *Logos* existed. Who or what was this *Logos*? A person; or an attribute of God? A real agent; or only the wisdom, or reason, or power of God?

It is of no importance in settling this question, that we should know with certainty, whence John derived the appellation, *Logos*. The most probable reason, in my mind, is, that this appellation is bestowed on Christ in reference to his becoming the Instructor, or Teacher of mankind; the medium of communication between God and them. Be this however, as it may; the *Logos* appears to be a *person*, and not merely an *attribute*. For *first*, the attributes of God are no where else *personified*, by the New Testament writers; i. e. the usage of the New Testament writers is against this. *Secondly*, As *Logos* can properly mean here only *wisdom* and *word*, (if considered as an abstract term, or designating an attribute merely,) I cannot perceive how the *wisdom* of God, or the *word* (in the abstract sense) of God, "*became flesh and dwelt among us*," v. 14.; or why John should select either the wisdom or word of God, as any more concerned with the incarnation, v. 14, than the *benevolence of God*, or the *mercy of God*, which one might suppose would be the attributes of God more specially displayed in the incarnation. *Thirdly*, If *Logos* mean

here the *power* of God, as many assert, the exposition is attended with the same difficulties. *Fourthly*, If it mean, as others aver, the *power of God putting itself forth*, i. e. in creation, it is liable to the same objections. In short, make it any attribute of God thus personified, and you introduce a mode of writing which the N. Testament no where else displays ; and which even the Old Testament exhibits but once, Prov. viii. ; and this in poetry of the most animated and exalted nature.

Yet this is not the chief difficulty. To what class of men could John address the affirmation, that the *Logos*, (*wisdom, word, or power* of God,) was “ with God ? ” Where did these singular heretics suppose the *power* of God was, except *with him* ? or where, his *wisdom* or his *word* ? And a singular pertinacity too, in their strange opinion they must have had, to induce the Apostle to repeat with emphasis in the second verse, that this *Logos* was with God. What would be said of a man, who should gravely assert, that “ the power of Peter is with Peter ; or his *wisdom* ; or his *word* ? ” Suppose he should add, “ *The power or wisdom of Peter, is Peter ;* ” with what class of mystics should we rank him ? Yet John adds ; *The Logos was God*.

Until then some heretics can be discovered of the apostolic age, who maintained that the attributes of God *were not with him*, I cannot explain how the apostle could assert twice, successively and emphatically, that they *were with him*. Equally difficult is it for me to divine, how he could say that any attribute, (*power, or wisdom,*) *was God* ; understanding the word God in any sense you please. If it mean *supreme God* ; then it reduces itself to this, either that one attribute is the supreme God ; or that there are as many Gods as attributes. If it mean

an inferior God, then the *wisdom* of God being an inferior God, supposes that his other attributes are superior ones ; or else that his wisdom is exalted to the place of *quasi* God, while his other attributes occupy a lower place.

If it should however be said, that the supposition of there having been a sect of heretics, who held that the attributes of God were *not with him*, is not necessary to justify the apostle for having penned the first verse of his gospel ; but that we may regard this verse as written simply for general instruction : then I would ask, whether a revelation from heaven is necessary to instruct us, that the *attributes of being are with that being* ; or what can be thought of the *power* of God being God himself ?

Proceed we to the second clause ; *Και ὁ λογος ην προς τον Θεον* ; and the *Logos* was with God ; i. e. as all agree, with God the Father. Compare verses 14 and 18 ; also chap. xvii., 5, and 1 John, i. 1, 2, which make the point clear. Is this expression capable of any tolerable interpretation, without supposing that the *Logos*, who was *with God*, was in some respect or other, different, or *diverse from that God with whom he was* ? This *Logos* was the same that became incarnate, ver. 14., that made the most perfect revelation of the will and character of God to men, ver. 18., and was called Christ. He was therefore, in some respect diverse from the Father, and by no means to be confounded with him.

Και Θεος ην ὁ λογος ; And the *Logos* was God. It has been proposed, (in Impr. Vers. of N. Test.,) to render the word *Θεος*, a god. Does then the Christian Revelation admit of Gods superior and inferior ? Or to what class of inferior gods does the *Logos* belong ? And

how much would such a theory of divine natures differ from that which admits a Jupiter Optimus, Maximus, and Dii majores et minores?

But it is said, that “Θεός is destitute of the article, and therefore cannot designate the divine Being, who is Supreme.” This observation, however, is very far from being justified, either by the usage of the sacred writers, or the principles of Greek syntax. Among instances where the Supreme God is certainly designated and yet the article is omitted, the inquirer may consult the very chapter in question, ver. 6, 13, 18; also, Matt. xix. 26.—Luke xvi. 13.—John ix. 33.—xvi. 30.—Rom. viii. 8.—1 Cor. i. 3.—Gal. i. 1.—Ephes. ii. 8.—Heb. ix. 14. Besides; every reader of Greek knows, that where the subject of a proposition, (in this case ὁ λόγος,) has the article, the predicate (Θεός,) omits it. Such is Greek usage; and from this dissent only propositions of a reciprocating or convertible nature; as in ver. 4, of the chapter in question. It may be added too, that if the writer had said, Καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν ὁ Θεός; it would have conveyed a very different sense from the proposition as it now stands. He would then have said, *The Logos is the God, with whom he is*; whereas I understand Θεός here to mean the divine nature, simply considered, for which it so often stands in other places.

I readily acknowledge, that *affirmative* evidence of the somewhat diverse meaning of Θεός here cannot be drawn from the word itself; but must be deduced from the circumstances of the affirmation, united with the supposition that John did assert, and did mean to assert, something that is intelligible. There is indeed no difficulty, in taking Θεός (*God*) in the same sense in both clauses. To interpret the verse thus, would represent

John as saying, that while Christ was God, or truly divine; there was, at the same time, a sense in which he was *with* God. Now, how can this be understood as making any possible sense, unless a distinction in the Godhead be admitted; viz. that the Father is not in all respects the Son?

But, separately from objections which an opponent might feel to understanding the word *God* here, in a sense somewhat diverse in the two clauses; I should have no hesitation in so doing. Every word takes a sense adapted to its connexion. Such is the rule which must be adopted, after we have once conceded that a writer uses words with propriety, and designs to be understood. So, when our Saviour says, "Let the dead bury their dead;" the connexion requires us to explain it thus; 'Let those who are morally or spiritually dead bury those who are corporeally so.' It were easy to accumulate examples, where the very same word, in the very same verse, has two different shades of sense. The exigency of the passage, (*exigentia loci*), is the rule of interpretation which guides us here.

I understand John then, as affirming that the *Logos* was God, and yet was with God; viz. that he was truly divine, but still divine in such a manner, that there did exist a distinction between him and the Father. I take *God* in one case to mean, (as in a great number of cases it does mean,) God as Father; in the other case (which is equally common,) as a description of divine nature,—of the divinity, without reference to the distinction of Father.

Least of all, have those a right to object to this, who here make the meaning of *God*, in the second instance, to be infinitely different from its meaning in the first in-

stance ; understanding by one, a created, or derived and finite being ; by the other the self existent, independent, and infinite God.

If you ask now, What could be the object of John in asserting that *the Logos was with God* ? I answer, that the phrase *to be with one*, (*ειναι προς τινα*,) indicates *conjunction, communion, familiarity, society*. See Mark ix. 19. Compare too John i. 18, where the only begotten Son is said to be “in the bosom, (*εις τον κολπον*,) of the Father ;” which is a phrase of similar import.

To illustrate the meaning of the phrase *to be with God*, it is useful also to compare those cases, where Christians are promised as the summit of their felicity, that they shall be with God and Christ, and be where they are. See among other passages, John xiv. 2, 3.—xii. 26.—xvii. 24.—1 Thess. iv. 17. Compare Rom. viii. 17.—2 Tim. ii. 11, 12.—Colos. iii. 1—4.

In John xvii. 5, Christ speaks of that “glory, which he had *with the Father*, before the world was.” From all these passages taken together, it would seem that the phrase of the *Logos being with God*, amounts to asserting that he was *conjunctissimus Deo, most intimately connected with him*. If you ask me, *how* ? I answer freely that I cannot tell. The Evangelist has asserted the *fact*, but has not added one word to explain the *modus*. If I could explain it ; then I could define the distinction that I believe to exist in the Godhead.

But why should John assert such a connexion ? In opposition, I answer to those in early times, who asserted that Christ was a being not only distinct from God, but *an emanation from him* ? And why should he assert at the same time that *the Logos was God* ?—In opposition, as I must think, to the same persons, who strenuously denied his Divinity.

But does the Evangelist mean here, to assert of the *Logos* that he is God in the true and supreme sense, or not? This is the fundamental question between us. The probability drawn from the New Testament usage of the word *Θεός*, (which nowhere else employs *Θεός* simply and singly, except to designate the Supreme God,) must be admitted strongly to favour the idea, that Christ is asserted to be divine. I readily allow that the word *God* has various applications, in the Old Testament; that it is applied, (though only in the plural number) to magistrates; that it is used to designate those who stand, as it were, in the place of God for a time, as Moses was to be for a *god* to Pharaoh, (Exod. vii. 1;) and instead of God to Aaron, (Exod. iv. 16.) But it is not possible to mistake any instances of this nature. The adjuncts, or context, always guard effectually against mistake. Men, or inferior beings are never called God, or gods *simply*. We read of a “god to Pharaoh,”—and “I have said ye are gods, *but ye shall die like men*; the god of Ekron; the god of the Ammonites, the gods of the heathen, &c.” Is a mistake possible here?—But the *Logos* is called *God simply*. Nor is this all. Even admitting that the name determined nothing, (and for sake of argument I am willing to admit it;) yet the writer has added explanations of his meaning, which seem to place it beyond the reach of fair debate, what he intended to assert by the expression in question.

Πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο· καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν, ὃ γέγονεν. ὁ κόσμος δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο. “All things were [made,] by him; and without him was nothing [made,] which was [made]. The world was [made] by him.”

I have excluded the word *made*, by placing it in

brackets, merely to show that the sense is in no wise changed, if we listen to those critics, who tell us that *εγενετο* never means *made*, and render the passage accordingly. But nothing can be farther from correctness, than such an assertion, respecting *εγενετο*. Accordingly *ποιεω* and *γινωμαι* are used as synonymes; as in James iii. 9. Compare Gen. i. 26 in the Septuagint.—Gen. ii. 4—Is. xlviii. 7; and the cases where *γινωμαι* means to *make*, or *produce*, are so numerous and obvious, that a moment's delay in respect to this part of the subject would be useless. Schleusner's Lexicon, under the word *γινωμαι*, will furnish adequate proof. If not; read the commentary of Theodoret on the two first chapters of Genesis; which places the question beyond debate.

But what are the *τα παντα* (*the universe*) which the *Logos* made, or caused? "The moral world—the Christian church;" answers Faustus Socinus. But in the way of this, lie two difficulties: the *first*, that a part of these *τα παντα* are (verse 10) represented as *κοσμος*, *the world*; a term never applied to the Christian church, in the New Testament, nor to men as morally emended by the gospel: the *second*, that this very world (*κοσμος*) which he created, *αυτον ουκ εγνω*, *Did not know, or acknowledge him*; whereas the distinguishing trait of Christians is, that *they know Christ*; that they *know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent*.

The *τα παντα* then, which the *Logos* created, means, (as common usage, and the exigency of the passage require,) *the universe*; the worlds material and immaterial; (ver. 10). Here consequently is a passage, in which beyond all reasonable doubt, Christ is called *God*; and where the context, instead of furnishing us with reasons (as is usual, when the term is applied to inferior beings,) for understanding this word in the inferior sense, has di-

rectly and unequivocally taught us that this Θεός, (*God*), who was *Logos*, did create the universe. The question then is reduced simply to this state; viz. Whether he, who created the Universe, is truly and properly divine? On this question I shall make a few remarks, when I have considered some other passages, which ascribe creation to Christ.

Heb. i. 10—12. Καὶ Σὺ κατ' ἀρχᾶς, κυριε, τὴν γῆν ἐθεμελίωσας, καὶ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν σου εἰσιν οἱ οὐρανοί. Αὐτοὶ ἀπολύνονται, σὺ δὲ διαμένεις· καὶ πάντες ὥς ἱμάτιον παλαιωθήσονται, καὶ ὥσει περιβολαῖον ἐλίξεις αὐτοὺς, καὶ ἀλλαγῇσονται· σὺ δὲ ὁ αὐτὸς εἶ, καὶ τὰ ἔτη σου οὐκ ἐκλείψουσι. “And Thou, Lord, in the beginning has laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish, but thou remainest; and they shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.”

These words are spoken of the *Son of God*, being intimately connected by the conjunction (καὶ) with ver. 8, where it is written, “But unto the *Son* he saith,” &c. According to the laws of grammar, and most clearly according to the nature and design of the Apostle’s argument, the ellipsis to be supplied after καὶ (and,) in the beginning of the tenth verse, is, “And [*to the Son he saith,*] Thou, Lord,” &c. No other connexion or exposition can be pointed out, which does not make a violent divulsion of the passage, from the chain and connexion of the writer’s argument.

The question still remains; What is meant by *‘founding the earth*, and the heavens being the work of Christ’s hands?’ Compare now the passages, in which Jehovah is said to have founded the earth, and in which the cre-

ation of it is indubitably meant. They may be found, in Ps. xxiv. 2—lxxxix. 11—civ. 5—cxix. 90—Job xxxviii. 4. Prov. iii. 19—Is. xlviii. 13—li. 13.—Zech. 12. 1; where if you inspect the Septuagint, you will see the very verb *θεμελιω* employed, which the apostle uses in our text.

In regard to the “heavens being the work of Christ’s hands;” it is an expression plainly equivalent to the other, and signifies the work of creation. Thus, Ps. viii. 4, 6; “When I consider the heavens, *the work of thy hands* ;” which is a parallel with, “The moon and stars which thou hast ordained,” (Septuagint, *εθεμελιωσας*.) So in verse 6th; “And hast placed him over *the work of thy hands* ; *All things* hast thou put under his feet ;” i.e. placed him over the creation.

To settle the meaning of the phrase *creating the heavens and the earth*, (i. e. to show that it means creating *all things*,) compare Gen. i. 1—Ex. xx. 11—xxx. 17—Neh. ix. 6—Ps. cxxi. 2—cxxxiv. 3, and many other places that a Concordance will supply.

It will be remembered, that the passage in question, (Heb. i. 10—12,) is a quotation from the Old Testament; and that to quote the language of the Old Testament, therefore, in order to explain it, is peculiarly appropriate and necessary.

Could any one, unembarrassed by peculiarity of system, ever suspect that *founding the earth*, and *the heavens being the work of his hands*, could mean any thing less than the creation of the universe? Yet we have been told by some distinguished Unitarians, that the *heavens* mean the Christian state or dispensation, and the *earth* the *Jewish* one. But *first*, this is against the usage of the language, either in the Old or New Testament; there being nothing to support such a sense of it. Isaiah

indeed speaks of *creating a NEW heaven, and a NEW earth*, (lxv. 17.) and of *planting the heavens and the earth*, (li. 16.) in a moral sense; i. e. making a moral change or creation. But then the language itself in the first case indicates, of course, that the *old* creation is NOT meant; and in the second case, the context makes it as clear, what kind of heaven and earth is to be planted or established; namely, the Jewish church and state is to be renewed and established. The meaning assigned then by the Unitarians in question to the passage in Heb. i., is against the plain and perpetual usage of the Scriptures, wherever such expressions occur in an *unlimited form*, as they do in the passage under examination.

But *secondly*; if the Jewish and Christian states are meant here, in what sense are they to wax old as a garment, and to be changed? Of the Jewish state, this might without much difficulty be affirmed. But how the Christian dispensation is to be changed; how that “kingdom, which *shall have no end*,” (Luke i. 33,) is to “perish;” is what I am unable to explain.

“It is a moral creation,” says Artemonius (i. e. Crellius, Init. Evang. Johan,) “of which Christ is the author.” This however does not explain the matter; for how is it that the *moral creation* of Christ is to *perish*—and be *changed*, i. e. annihilated? Most obviously, his moral creation is to be eternal.

Another method of explaining this subject has been, to aver that the passage quoted here by the apostle, in the original (Ps. cii. 25—27) is plainly applicable to Jehovah only; and that none would conjecture, from the perusal of this Psalm, that Christ could be meant.

Conceding this, (and it would be difficult not to concede it,) what is the consequence? Either that the apostle

has applied directly and without qualification to Christ, language used by an inspired writer of the Old Testament to designate the Creator of the world, with his eternal and immutable nature ; or that he has, (in a most singular way indeed for a man of piety and honesty,) accommodated language descriptive of the infinite Jehovah, to a created and dependent being. The word *κύριε* (*Lord*) in the Greek, corresponds to the word *Jehovah* in the original Hebrew ; the Septuagint having commonly rendered it in this manner. And though יהוה (*Jehovah*) is not in the Hebrew text, (Ps. cii. 26,) yet it is undoubtedly understood there, as the Nom. to “thou hast founded ;” which is evident from the preceding context. Christ then is called by the Apostle here, *Jehovah* ; and *eternity, immutability, and the creation of the universe* are ascribed to him.*

I cannot think that the paraphrase of Grotius, on the passage in question, deserves a serious refutation. “Thou wast the cause,” says he, “that the earth was founded, and on thy account the heavens were made.” If this be not a different thing from what the language of the apostle naturally means, or can mean, I confess, I

* I readily admit, that *κύριος* is not always synonymous with *Jehovah*. But in passages selected from the Old Testament, in which passages the word *Jehovah* is there used, *κύριος* stands in the Septuagint and in the New Testament as the translation of it. Therefore *κύριος* in the New Testament must of course, in such cases, have the same meaning as *Jehovah* in the Old Testament. The reason why *κύριος* is used by the New Testament writers, as the translation of *Jehovah* in the Hebrew Scriptures, is, that the Jews in reading their sacred writings, were not accustomed to pronounce the word *Jehovah* (יהוה) but read, for the most part, אדוני, *Lord*, *κύριος*, in the room of it. This custom is at least as old as the Septuagint Version, which translates יהוה by *κύριος*, and thus exhibits proof, that the modern custom of reading אדוני for יהוה was then religiously observed.

know not any bounds which may be set to paraphrastic and mystical exegesis. Suppose now the Gnostics, who maintained that evil demons and not Jehovah created the world, should have paraphrased the first verse in Genesis, in exactly the same manner; "Thou Jehovah wast the cause, why the heavens and the earth were created!" and when asked how this could be, they should have replied, "out of enmity to thee the evil demons brought this matter into existence;" then they would have had an argument to take away the creatorship of Jehovah, exactly like that by which Grotius intends to remove the evidence of Christ's divinity.

Col. i. 15—17. Ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀορατοῦ, πρωτοτοκος πάσης κτίσεως ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα, τὰ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, τὰ ὄρατα καὶ τὰ ἀόρατα, εἴτε θρόνοι, εἴτε κυριότητες, εἴτε ἀρχαί, εἴτε ἐξουσίαι· τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἐκτίσται· καὶ αὐτός ἐστι πρὸ πάντων, καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνεστήκε·
 "Who is the image of the invisible God, the head of all creation; for by him were all things created, both celestial and terrestrial, visible and invisible, of whatever order or grade they are; all things were created by him and for him. Therefore he was before all things, and by him are all things sustained,"

The places in which I have departed from our common version, are not differently rendered in order to make them favor the cause which I have espoused; for they determine nothing respecting the point now at issue. They are rendered as above, merely to make the meaning of the passage, in general, as plain as the nature of the case will permit.

Because Christ is said, verse 20, "to reconcile (καταλλάξαι) all things unto himself," which is explained to be "things in heaven, and things on earth;" and

afterwards is represented as breaking down the wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles; some ingenious commentators have supposed that "things in heaven, and things on earth" mean *Jews and Gentiles*. How very unnatural this explanation is, every one who reads the passage unbiassed, it seems to me, cannot help feeling. And in what tolerable sense, can the Jews and Gentiles be called "things visible and invisible?" And what are the various orders and ranks in these two classes? By "reconciling things in heaven and things on earth," seems to be meant, bringing into union, (by a new and special bond of intercommunication,) under one great head, i. e. Christ, both angels and men. In like manner on earth, the two great parties, Jews and Gentiles, are united together. But why Christ should be called "the image of the invisible God," and the "head (πρωτοτοκος) of all creation," because he is the instrument of bringing Jews and Gentiles together merely, is not apparent to me. But when you understand the words of the apostle, as describing the creation of the world celestial, and terrestrial, (οἱ οὐρανοὶ καὶ ἡ γῆ, comp. Heb. i. 10—12,) and ascribing it to Christ; then you find sufficient reason, for designating him by the exalted appellations in question.

A *moral creation* has also been affirmed to be the creation, here ascribed to Christ. But the words in such a connexion and with such adjuncts, are no where else used in this sense. Moreover, in what sense has the moral creation by Christ affected the angels? The good ones needed no repentance or pardon; the bad ones have never sought or obtained either.

I must therefore, until I see different light shed over the passage in question, regard it as very clearly ascribing creation to Christ.

But you will say, perhaps, that in John i. 3, "All things are said to be made *δια Χριστου*, *by Christ*, as the *instrumental*, not the *principal* cause; the preposition *Δια* denoting such cause. In Col. i. 16, all things in like manner are said to have been created *by Christ*, (*δι' αὐτου*;) and in Heb. i. 2, God is said to have created the worlds *by* his Son; *Δια οὗ* (sc. *υἱου*) *καὶ τοὺς αἰῶνας ἐποίησε*.

The allegation however, that *Δια* does not designate the *principal* cause as well as the *instrumental*, can by no means be supported. In Romans xi. 36, "All things are said to be of God, (*ἐξ αὐτου*;) and by God, (*δι' αὐτου*;) the very form of Expression applied to Christ, in Colos. i. 16—20. So Heb. ii. 10; "For it became him, (God, the Father,) *δι' οὗ*, for whom are all things, and by whom (*δι' οὗ*) are all things," &c. 1 Cor. i. 9; "God is faithful, by whom (*δι' οὗ*) ye were called into the fellowship of his Son," &c. Moreover, *ἐκ* and *δια* are sometimes interchanged as equivalents or synonymes. See Romans iii. 30. So also *ἐν* and *δια*, Col. i. 16; *τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη* and *δι' αὐτου ἐκτίσται*; i. e. *ἐν* and *δια* are used as of the same import. See Schleusner's Lex. in voc. *δια*.

The difficulty remaining is, to explain the phrase, "by whom (*δι' οὗ*) he, the Father, made the worlds;" Heb. i. 2. The apostle has added sufficient in verses 10—12, as it would seem, to prevent mistake here. If however, the difficulty seem to press still, it may be compared to Hosea i. 7; "I (Jehovah) will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them *by Jehova*, ביהוה." Is the second Jehovah, the *instrumental* cause in this case; or belongs the whole merely to *form of expression*? Still, may not the apostle design to as-

sert, that *the Godhead in respect to the distinction of Son, was in a special manner concerned with the creation of the worlds?* What is there impossible, or improbable in this?

From the passages of Scripture thus far considered, it appears plain, that the apostles have ascribed the creation of the universe to Christ. And now we come, in order, to the consideration of the simple question, whether he who created the world is really and truly divine?

First then, let me ask; If the act of creation does not designate the being, who effects it, to be omniscient, omnipotent, and independent; then is it possible for me to conceive of any thing, which does or can designate a Divine Being? To bring this world into existence from nothing; to establish such perfect harmony and design through all the operations of nature; to set in motion unnumbered worlds and systems of worlds, and all in the most perfect harmony and order, requires more intelligence, more power, and more wisdom, than ever belonged to any finite being. And if these things do not characterise the infinite Being, then no proof can be adduced that such a Being exists.

It is in vain to tell me here, that the creation of the universe can be performed by *delegation*; by an inferior and subordinate Being. What can be meant by omnipotence, omniscience, and infinite wisdom, (all of which are visibly necessary in a Creator,) being *delegated*? Can God *delegate* his perfections? If so, then the Gnostics, in arguing with you, might every where assert, that the God of the Jews created the world only by delegation; that he was not therefore the Supreme God. Your reply would be—Is then the act of creating the Universe

one which any finite or secondary being can perform? If this do not designate the absolute, supreme, omnipotent, and omniscient Being; then no proof that such a Being exists can possibly be adduced.

Our reply to you then, shall be in the very words that you would use, in disputing with a Gnostic. Christ is the CREATOR; and Christ must therefore be God.

Accordingly, the Bible every where appeals to *creative* power, as the peculiar and pre-eminent attribute of the Supreme God; and attributes it solely to Jehovah. Read, for instance, Gen. ii. 2, 3—Ex. xx. 11—Is. xlv. 24—Jer. x. 12—Ps. viii. 3, 4—cii. 25, and innumerable other places. Read Isaiah xl., and onward, where God by his prophet makes a most solemn challenge to all polytheists, to bring the objects of their worship into competition with him; and designates himself as distinguished from them all, by his being “the Creator of the ends of the earth,” (v. 28;) and by his having formed and arranged the heavens, (v. 26.) So in Psalm xix., the heavens are appealed to as exhibiting his glory, and the firmament as displaying the work of his hands; i. e. as affording evidence that he only could have formed them. Need I say, that the Old Testament is filled with passages which ascribe the work of creation to Jehovah alone? Who does not find them every where intermixed, in the most delightful and affecting manner, with all the instructions of the sacred Hebrew writers?

Now if a subordinate agent, a *finite spirit*, did create the universe; why should all the instructions of the Old Testament be so framed, as inevitably to lead the Jewish nation to disbelieve and reject this fact? Specially so, as the Jews were so very strongly inclined to polytheism; and such a doctrine would have been very

agreeable to their notion of things? And why, after a lapse of so many centuries, should the writers of the New Testament overturn all that the Hebrew Scriptures had taught on this subject, and lead men to admit, that a *finite being* could and did create the world? Most of all; how could Paul say, (Rom. i. 20,) that the heathen were without excuse, for not acknowledging the eternal power and godhead of the Divinity from the bare evidence, which his CREATING power afforded; from considering the THINGS THAT WERE MADE?

And is this truth, that the Deity possesses eternal power and godhead, so plain then, and so easily deduced from CREATING ENERGY, that the very heathen are destitute of all excuse, who do not see and admit it; and yet is it an object of Christianity to bring us back towards the very polytheism, on account of which the apostle condemned them? To bring us to worship the *creature*, as the CREATOR? Does Christianity contradict a fundamental truth of natural religion? And after reading such a passage in Paul; can it be possible to suppose, that he ascribed the creation of the world to any but the true God only? Read Acts xvii. 23—26, and compare John i. 1—3, & 10; —Heb. i. 10—12; Colos. i. 15—17: then say, Is it possible to admit the rules of interpretation, which you have laid down, and not admit that the apostles meant to assert, that Christ is the Creator of the Universe?—And if so; is it possible to deny that he is truly divine?

It were easy to produce more passages, which ascribe the same works to Christ as to God; (as John v. 17—23. —xiv. 9, 10.) But as the vindication of these would swell these letters beyond their proper length, I shall not enter into the discussion of them at present. I am not anxious to increase the number of witnesses; for

acknowledging the New Testament to be of divine authority, I consider whatever it plainly declares once, to be the truth. The relevancy and plainness of the testimony therefore, is more the object of my solicitude than the number of witnesses: a point, I may add, in which many, who have defended our sentiments, have greatly erred.

I proceed therefore, to other texts of Scripture in which Christ is declared to be God.

Rom. ix. 5. Ὡν οἱ πατερες, και εξ ὧν ὁ Χριστος, το κατα σαρκα, ὁ ὧν επι παντων Θεος ευλογητος εις τους αιωνας. Αμην. "Whose are the Fathers; and from whom in respect to the flesh (his human nature) Christ [descended] who is the supreme God, blessed for ever, Amen."

In regard to this text, it may be remarked, *first*, that although Griesbach has filled his margin with conjectural and other readings, he attributes no considerable weight to any of them; for *all the Manuscripts* of the Epistle to the Romans, which have been collated, *contain the text as it stands*; as do *all the ancient Versions*, and *nearly all the Fathers*.

In rendering το κατα σαρκα, *in respect to his human nature*, I feel supported by corresponding passages, in Rom. i. 3—Acts ii. 30. And that ὁ ὧν επι παντων Θεος ευλογητος εις τους αιωνας, is literally translated, *who is supreme God, blessed forever*, may be shown in various ways. Ὁ ὧν is here put as is common (see John i. 13—iii. 13—2 Cor. ii. 31) for ὅς εστι, *who is*. The ground of this lies simply in the nature of Greek usage. Whenever ὁ is used for ὅς, the participle ὧν is used with ὁ, instead of the Verb which ὅς takes. Thus ὁ ὧν; but ὅς εστι, invariably.

Επι παντων Θεος is literally, "*over-all God*," i. e. su-

preme God. Compare now with the phrase here, the word *παντα* (*all*) as used in Col. i. 17—Eph. i. 19—23—John iii. 31—1 Cor. xv. 27, and in respect to Christ. Most clearly it points him out as the head, or ruler of the universe. What then can *επι παντων Θεος* mean, but *supreme God*?

But on no text has greater pains been bestowed, to devise an unusual construction and meaning for it. Schlichting proposed to transpose *δ ων*, and read *ων δ*; i. e. *of whom* (the Jewish Fathers) *is God, blessed forever*. But as in this very Epistle, the apostle has laboured to prove that God belongs as well to the Gentiles as the Jews, (ch. iii. 29,) this expedient would seem to impeach the apostle's consistency as well as violate the text. Nor would the Greek itself, as emended by Schlichting's conjecture, be in any measure accordant with the idiom of that language. If *Θεος* has the article, (and his transposition makes it *δ Θεος*,) then *ευλογητος* must of necessity have it too; inasmuch as an adjective following a noun with an article, and agreeing with it, of necessity takes the article.

Wetstein's conjecture, that it should be read *δ ων, δ επι παντων Θεος*, is not any more fortunate. Such instances as *δ ων δ*, all relating to the same subject are contrary to the usage of the Greek language. Besides; this conjecture, like that of Schlichting, not only violates the integrity of the text, but gives to *Θεος* the article, and omits it before *ευλογητος*: which cannot at all be admitted.

Enough of amending the Apostle's words, without the authority of a single Manuscript or Version. Critical acumen has also employed itself in dividing and translating the verse in question, in a manner different from

that in the common Version. The late Professor Justi, at Marpurg, a man of great acuteness and fine taste, undertook the defense of the ingenious supposition, that the latter part of the verse is a doxology. He renders it, "Whose ancestors were those [renowned] Fathers, from whom the Messiah, as to his mortal body was derived, who is exalted over all [the Fathers.] God be blessed forever!" Thus with the help of supplying an idea, which the text cannot well be said to have implied; and by doing violence to the custom of language, in the doxological part; he has devised a method in which we may avoid the assertion, that Christ is *God over all*, or *supreme God*. But who does not perceive the violence and inappositeness of the divulsion which he makes, of the former from the latter part of the verse? Besides; how would a doxology fit the passage in question? Crellius, (Init. Evang. Johan. p. 230, 237) long ago was candid enough to own, that when the apostle was affected with the greatest sadness, on account of the unbelief of his Jewish brethren and the loss of their privileges, a *doxology* was not very congruous. A prayer, (as in ch. x. 1,) would seem, as he thinks, to be much more appropriate.

Omitting however, all this; it may be added, that Greek usage by no possibility admits of the doxological version of Justi. Θεος ευλογητος means, *God who is blessed*; i.e. the proposition in such a case is assumed, not asserted. But Ευλογητος ὁ Θεος means, *God be blessed; let God be blessed, or praised*. In accordance with this Greek usage, we find five instances of doxology in the New Testament, and about forty in the Old, in which ευλογητος is uniformly placed FIRST. The same is the case with καταρατος, (cursed,) when an imprecation is uttered.

Add to all this; that the text must be changed to make out a doxology; and we must read ὁ Θεός, instead of Θεός; for universally usage prescribes *Εὐλογητός ὁ Θεός*. (The instance Ps. lxxvii. 19. Sept. brought by Stoltz in his *Erleuterungen*, &c., to support Justi's rendering, depends merely on wrong punctuation, and the repetition of a word which does not correspond to the Hebrew text.) If a doxology to the Father were intended here, it is scarcely possible to suppose, moreover, that a particle of transition, (δε for instance,) should not have been inserted, in order to give notice of so great a change. In any other case we should expect to find it thus, ὁ δε ων; or if the doxology begin at Θεός, then *εὐλογητός ὁ Θεός*. No text; no Manuscript; no ancient Version gives us a trace of either of these readings. To make them therefore, and force them upon the text; or to substitute a conjecture, which originated from theological speculation against the plain and incontrovertible evidence of the integrity of the text; what is it, but to introduce a principle fundamentally subversive of all interpretation and criticism, and give up the Scriptures to be moulded to every man's own wishes?

All conjectures and theories, then, appear to be quite incompetent to explain away the common rendering of the verse, and the meaning connected with it. On the other hand, we may ask; How comes it that Christ, *according to his human nature*, (το κατὰ σαρκά,) is said to have descended from the Fathers? What if I should affirm that David, as to his human nature, was descended from Jesse? Would you not of course ask, what other nature had he, except human? And this question, forced upon us by the expression in question, the apostle has immediately answered; as to his nature not human, he

was “supreme God, blessed forever, Amen.” To have produced the human nature, connected with such an exalted being, the apostle reckons as one of the special privileges which the Jews had enjoyed. verses 1—5.

I do not argue that Christ is divine, merely from having the appellation Θεός. But if ὁ ἐπὶ παντῶν Θεός be not *supreme God*; and if the *antithesis* in this verse do not require us to understand a divine nature here; then I must despair of ever finding what is the sentiment of any portion of Scripture, by any or all the rules of exegesis.

Heb. i. 8, 9. Ὁ θρόνος σου ὁ Θεός εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος· ῥάβδος ευθυτητος ἢ ῥάβδος τῆς βασιλείας σου. ἤγαπησας δικαιοσύνην, καὶ ἐμισήσας ἀνομίαν· διὰ τοῦτο ἐχρίσε σε ὁ Θεός, ὁ Θεός σου, ἐλαίον ἀγαλλιασεως παρα τοὺς μετοχούς σου. “But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.”

This passage is quoted from Ps. xlv. 6, 7. It has been objected, that ὁ Θεός here should not be translated as the Vocative, but Nominative; e. g. “God is thy throne, forever and ever; or thine everlasting throne, or support.”

To this it may be replied; ὁ Θεός is a common Vocative, (of an Attic form,) of the *New Testament and the Septuagint*. No objection to the common rendering of this verse, can be made from the *form* of the word, which is altogether a common one in Hellenistic Greek. The Attics write ω Θεός. (Vide Sept. passim in Psalmis.)

To the translation, “God is thy throne,” there are several objections.

1. Greek *usage* does not permit such a version. The subject and predicate cannot both have the article, (as here,) unless in the case of a convertible, or reciprocal sentence; which surely will not be urged, in this case. “*God is thy throne,*” would stand in Greek, ὁ Θεὸς θρόνος σου.* For such a change in the text there is no respectable authority.

2. Such a translation would render insipid the argument of the apostle, in this chapter, to prove the pre-eminently exalted nature of Christ. To say of this illustrious personage, “*God is thy throne,*” might excite the persons to whom the epistle was addressed to ask, “*And who is not supported by God?*” How is Christ entitled on this account, to claim any preeminence in our regard?

3. Such a translation contradicts the meaning of the word *throne*, understood either literally or figuratively. Literally, it is the *seat* on which kings sit. This sense is out of the question here. *Figuratively*, it stands for *dominion, empire, regal authority*; (because it is one of the ensigns of such authority.) But there is no such figurative sense to it, as that of *support*. And what sense would it make, to say, *God is thy dominion, thy regal authority*? If you reply; this may mean, “*God is the cause of thy dominion, or regal authority*, (as it often has been said;) then I ask again, of what king’s dominion and authority is not God the cause? Is it not the universal doctrine of the Bible, that “*by him kings reign, and princes decree justice?*” And how then is Christ entitled to any preeminence, because God is the cause of his dominion? Or how much advance does the apostle make in his argument, by such an assertion?

* See the latter clause of the verse; where ἡ ἑαῖδος is the subject, but ἑαῖδος the predicate, according to the laws of the language.

4. There is another objection still, to the translation in question. This is drawn from the nature of Hebrew parallelism in poetry. The verse in question is plainly one, in which the subject is the same in both parts ; i. e. it is a synonymous parallelism. Now the second member of this is, " The sceptre of thy kingdom is a sceptre of righteousness ;" in other words, *thy dominion is righteous*. The first member of the parallelism, consequently, is to be explained in the same way, and plainly means, *Thy dominion (throne) is everlasting*. What could be a more tasteless, not to say unmeaning proposition here, than this ; " God is thy throne," i. e. support, or cause of dominion ?

The proposed mode of rendering then, violates Greek usage ; frustrates the argument of the apostle ; does violence to the meaning of *ἰσχυρός*, and the nature of parallelism in the Hebrew original, from which the passage was taken.

I am fully aware of the objections which have been made to understanding the word *God*, in the passage now under consideration, in its highest sense. For 1st. It is said, that the person called God (*Elohim*,) here, calls another being his God, and therefore cannot be Supreme.

To the *fact*, I readily assent ; but the *conclusion* drawn from it, I must be permitted to doubt. If Christ be described in the xlv. Psalm, (and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews asserts this to be the fact,) he is described as mediator ; as incarnate ; as triumphing in this character and capacity over his enemies. Considered as Mediator, with the greatest propriety he might call Jehovah his God : for in the capacity of mediator simply, he is to be considered as incarnate ; and of course subordinate. Is

it a matter of wonder still, that the same person could be called *God*, and everlasting dominion ascribed to him, who the next moment calls Jehovah *his God*? It is a wonder of the same nature as that which so much perplexed the Jews, when Christ asked them how David could call the Messiah *Lord*, while at the same time he was his *Son*. It is a wonder, which no ground but that which Trinitarians take can ever explain—viz., that the divine and human natures coexisted in Christ; and that in the same sentence, he could with propriety speak of himself as human and divine. The sacred writers appear not to take the least pains to separate the two natures, in any thing which they say of either. They every where speak of Christ, (so it appears evident to me,) as either human or divine, or both. They do not appear to apprehend or fear any danger of mistake in regard to the subject; no more than we, when we say Abraham is dead, or Abraham is living, think it necessary to add, *as to his body*, in one case; or, *as to his soul*, in the other.

This very negligence, (if I may be allowed the expression, saving every thing that would imply improper want of care,) is a powerful argument with me, I must confess, to induce me to believe, that they regarded the human and divine natures as so intimately connected in Christ, that it was unnecessary and inexpedient to attempt a distinctive separation of them, on every occasion which brought to view the person or actions of Christ.

It has been objected, 2dly; that the xlv. Psalm, from which our text was taken, does not belong to the Messiah, but to David or Solomon. But how is this proved? “The language,” it is said, “is such as to show, that it is a mere epithalamium, on the marriage of one of these kings with a foreign princess.” I have no

time to enter into a discussion of this topic here ; but I am satisfied that the difficulties which press upon such a view of the xlv. Psalm, are overwhelming. Whatever may be said moreover to prove this, unless it be palpable demonstration, cannot weigh very much in the minds of those who regard the authority of the writer, who composed the Epistle to the Hebrews. He has told us that the passage in question is *addressed to the Son*.

Here then, if our view be correct, is one instance more, in which Christ is called God, with adjuncts that cannot well permit us to doubt, that the supreme God is meant.

I rank the texts which I have already produced, as the leading ones, to establish the divine nature of Christ. But there are others which must not be neglected. Will you permit me then, to advert briefly to a few other texts, which though not so entirely above exception as those that have been examined, still ought not to be omitted, in such an examination of Scripture evidence as the present.

1 John, v. 20. *Και οίδαμεν, ότι ο υίος του Θεου ήκει, και δεδωκεν ήμιν διανοιαν, ινα γνωσχωμεν τον αληθινον· και εσμεν εν τω αληθινω, εν τω υίω αυτου Ιησου Χριστω. Ούτος εστιν ο αληθινος Θεος και ή ζωη αιωνιος.* “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true ; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.”

There are two reasons here why *ο αληθινος Θεος, the true God*, may be referred to Christ. 1. The grammatical construction favours it. Christ is the most immediate antecedent. I grant that pronouns sometimes relate to a more remote antecedent ; but cases of this

nature stand on the ground of necessity, not of common grammatical usage. What doubt can there be, that John could without scruple call the *Logos*, whom he had before asserted to be *God*, and *to have created all things*, by the appellation of *ὁ ἀληθινός Θεός*?

But 2dly. My principal reason for referring *ὁ ἀληθινός Θεός*, (the true God) to Christ is, the other adjunct which stands with it; *This is the true God*—and the ETERNAL LIFE. How familiar this language is with John as applied to Christ may easily be seen. “In him, (i. e. Christ) was LIFE, this LIFE was the light of men—giving LIFE to the world—the bread of LIFE—my words are spirit and LIFE—I am the way, the truth, and the LIFE—the *Logos* of life. This life (Christ) was manifested and we have *seen it*, and do testify to you, and declare, the ETERNAL LIFE, which was with the Father, and was manifested to us.” 1 John, i. 1, 2. Now as I cannot find any instance in John’s writings, in which the appellation of LIFE, and *eternal LIFE* is bestowed upon the Father, to designate him as the author of spiritual and eternal life; and this occurs so frequently in John as applied to Christ; the laws of exegesis compel me here, to accord in my exposition with the common laws of grammar, and to construe, (as they cannot be separated,) both *ὁ ἀληθινός Θεός*, and *ἡ ζωὴ αἰωνίος*, (or as some Manuscripts consonantly with Greek idiom read, *ἡ ζωὴ ἡ αἰωνίος*,) both of Christ. If the *true God* then be not really divine, can any God be found who is?

John xx. 28. *Απεκριθὴ Θωμᾶς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· Ὁ κυρίου μου καὶ ὁ Θεός μου.* “And Thomas answered and said unto him, my Lord, and my God.”

My reasons for adducing this text are; 1. There is no satisfactory proof, that it is an exclamation of sur-

prise or astonishment. No formula of this nature, by which the Jews were accustomed to express surprise or astonishment, has yet been produced ; and there is no evidence that such a formula belongs to their language. Besides ; the evangelist tells us, that Thomas addressed himself to Jesus ; *εἶπεν αὐτῷ* ; not merely exclaimed. Chiefly however, the commendation which the Saviour immediately bestows upon Thomas, serves to defend the meaning which I attach to the verse. Christ commends him for having seen and believed. The evidence that he believed was contained in the expression under examination ; for before this expression, he is represented as doubtful. On the supposition then, that the expression was a mere exclamation, what evidence was it to the mind of Jesus, or of any others, that he admitted his claim to be the Saviour of men, and to the character which was connected with this office ? What more proof of real belief can be found in such an exclamation, (if it be one,) than we can find, every day, that men are Christians, who repeat the name of Jesus by way of exclamation, when surprized or delighted ? But if we admit that the words of Thomas were the proper evidence and expression of his belief, for which the Saviour commended him ; then we must admit that he will commend us for believing that he is both *Κυριος καὶ Θεος*, *Lord and God* : unless we adopt the notable expedient of Schlichting, who avers that *Lord* is to be referred to *Christ*, and *God* to the *Father* ; which latter he thinks Thomas spoke, after some interval of time had elapsed !

I pass over several passages, where our common text applies the name of God to Christ ; e. g. Acts xx. 28, and 1 Tim. iii. 16. In regard to this latter text however, I would simply remark, that it appears to me a plain

case, that the authorities which Griesbach himself has adduced would fairly lead to a decision different from his own, respecting the genuineness of the reading Θεός. I will not attempt to weigh them here ; as I feel no desire to press witnesses of a character at all dubious into my service. I admit the great desert of Griesbach in his critical edition of the New Testament. I believe he was a man who would not willingly, or consciously misrepresent either facts or arguments, for or against any reading. But the work which he undertook was too great for the accomplishment of one person, or even of one whole generation of critics. Dr. Lawrence, in his Essay upon the classification of Manuscripts by Griesbach, has more than rendered it probable, that Griesbach's account of facts is not unfrequently *very erroneous*, (not through design, but human infirmity ;) and that the principles, by which he estimated the value of Manuscripts and of course the genuineness of particular readings, are fundamentally erroneous. And since I am on this subject, I may take the liberty to state, (what seems to be so little known among us,) that Griesbach is not the only recent editor of a critical Testament, to which the great body of critics attach importance. The celebrated Matthäi, whom Middleton calls the best Greek scholar that ever edited a Greek Testament, published at Riga, (between A. D. 1782—1788,) a critical Testament, of 12 vols., which approaches much nearer to the Textus Receptus, than the Edition of Griesbach, with whom he is often at variance. Eichhorn, after giving a high character of this Edition of Matthäi, and noticing that the editor differs very much, in his maxims that respect the formation of the New Testament text, from Griesbach and others, says, that “ for a long time he

had followed the middle path between the two parties." (Bibliothek. Band ii. St. 2. s. 311.)

The whole system of classifying Manuscripts, which lies at the very foundation of all Griesbach's decisions in regard to the text, is rejected by Matthäi as worthless ; and Dr. Lawrence has, in the Essay above mentioned, made an attack upon the same classification, which renders questionable the principles of it ; at least the application of those principles as made by Griesbach.

Professor Knapp of Halle, has also published a Greek Testament, the text of which is independent of Griesbach's, although it approximates to his. This edition is esteemed, for its punctuation, the order of words, its accentuation, and spirituation ; and has great currency.

I acknowledge this is digression. But it may be useful to those, who are in the habit of attributing so much weight to Griesbach's decisions, to know that they are far from being uncontroverted by many of the best critics among his own countrymen. I know of no Commentator of note, who has made Griesbach's text his basis, except Paulus, who reexamines all his decisions.

To return however to our subject ; we do not want, and feel no disposition to use either of the texts referred to above as proof texts, in the great question before us.

There is another class of texts, which I have not hitherto mentioned, because the certainty of their meaning is commonly thought to be less capable of demonstration, than that of some others which I have produced. I refer to such texts, as Ephes. v. 5. *Εν τη βασιλεια του Χριστου και Θεου*, "the kingdom of Christ and God." Titus ii. 13. *Προσδεχομενοι την μακαριαν ελπιδα και επιφανειαν της δοξης του μεγαλου Θεου και σωτηρος ημων Ιησου*.

Χριστου* “Looking for the blessed hope and appearance of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.” 2 Tim. iv. 1.
 Διαμαρτυρομαι ενωπιου του Θεου, και Ιησου Χριστου του μελλοντος κρινειν ζωντας και νεκρους, και την επιφανειαν αυτου και την βασιλειαν αυτου* “I adjure you before the God, and Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the quick and the dead at his appearance and kingdom.” 2 Pet. i. 1. . . . του Θεου ημων και σωτηρος Ιησου Χριστου* “by the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

The mode of translating these texts here proposed, is altogether in conformity to the Greek idiom. Middleton (on the Article) thinks it absolutely *essential* to it. For although proper names and abstract nouns, in such a connexion as Θεος and Χριστος here, may take the article before the first noun, and omit it before the second, and yet designate *different things and persons*; yet words, which are *attributives*, if they omit the article in such a case, exhibit evidence that they are to be connected with a preceding noun, and are predicates of it, and not significant of separate beings. E. g. in the first case, Eph. v. 5; “the kingdom of Christ and God,” according to this rule would mean, “*of Christ who is God.*” In the second instance, Tit. ii. 13, the meaning is, “of the great God, who is our Saviour, &c.”

Mr. Wordsworth, a few years since, instituted a most laborious investigation of the Greek Fathers, to see whether the idiom in regard to the article here was admitted in their writings; and whether they ever understood more than *one person* to be designated by such expressions. The result I will give in his own words. (P. 132.) “I have observed more, I am persuaded, than a thousand instances of the form, ὁ Χριστος και Θεος, (Eph. v.

5;) some hundreds of instances of ὁ μέγας Θεός και σωτήρ, (Tit. ii. 13); and not fewer than several thousands, of the form ὁ Θεός και σωτήρ, (2 Pet. i. 1); while in no single case, have I seen, where the sense could be determined, any one of them used, *but only of one person.*”

After all; if there were no other evidence of the Divinity of Christ in the New Testament, than what depended solely on these texts, one might be led probably to hesitate concerning the subject. But when the method of translating here proposed, is perfectly conformable to the Greek idiom, (not to say demanded by it,) and conformable to other texts of the New Testament, in regard to sentiment; I confess the evidence which they afford, if not decisive, at least tends, in no small degree, to confirm the decision of those other texts. Specially is this the case in regard to the text in Titus: for where is the *appearing* of God the Father ever spoken of by the New Testament writers? It is *Christ* who *appears*; who will *appear* at the judgment; who *appeared* to execute vengeance upon the Jewish nation. Yet here, the *appearance of the great God* is mentioned; of the *great God and Saviour*; for so I cannot but believe, the text is fairly to be construed. Can this great God be any other than Christ himself?

Thus much for the texts, which bestow upon Christ the appellation of God, with adjuncts that show in what sense the word God must be understood, according to the common rules of interpreting language. I must now

II. Examine another class, which attribute to Christ equality with God, or that power, and dignity or honor, which belong to God.

Phil. ii. 5—8. Τοῦτο γὰρ φρονεῖσθω ἐν ὑμῖν ὁ και ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ὃς ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ ὑπαρχων, οὐχ ἄρπαγμα

ἡγήσατο το εἶναι ἰσα θεῷ, ἀλλ' ἑαυτὸν ἐκενώσε, μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν, ἐν ὁμοιωματι ἀνθρώπων γενομένος, καὶ σχηματι εὐρέθεις ὡς ἀνθρώπος· ἐταπείνωσεν ἑαυτὸν, γενομένος ὑπηκοὸς μεχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυρου. "Let the same mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus; who being in the condition of God, did not regard his equality with God as an object of solicitous desire, but humbled himself, (took upon himself an inferior or humble station) assuming the condition of a servant, being made after the similitude of men, and found in fashion as a man, he exhibited his humility by obedience even to the death of the cross."

Such is the rendering, which after laborious examination, I am persuaded the Greek of this passage not only admits, but demands. I will state my reasons, for dissenting from the common method, in which either Trinitarians or Unitarians have translated it.

Our common Version says, "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but humbled himself, &c." This Version seems to render nugatory, or at least irrelevant, a part of the Apostle's reasoning in the passage. He is enforcing the principle of Christian humility upon the Philippians. In order to urge this in the most effectual manner, he proposes to them the example of Christ; "Let the same mind be in you which was in Christ." What was this? It was manifested by the fact, that though essentially divine, (ἐν μορφῇ θεου,) he did not eagerly retain that condition, i. e. his equality with God, but assumed the station or condition of a servant, (μορφὴν δούλου). Here the relevancy of his reasoning is sufficiently plain. But how was it any proof or example of humility, that *he did not think it robbery to be equal with God?*

Besides; the Greek will not fairly bear this construction. Ἄρπαιγμος, translated *robbery*, does not seem here to signify *an act of robbery*, but *res rapta*, or rather, figuratively *res avida diripienda et vindicanda*; i. e. something which is eagerly to be seized and appropriated. (See Schleusner and Storr, in locum.) Moreover ἄρπαιγμος, which our translators have placed next to the verb *ἡγήσατο*, does not by the rules of Syntax belong there. The Greek Syntax would place the words thus, as to their sense; *οὐκ ἡγήσατο το εἶναι ἰσα θεῷ [κατὰ] ἄρπαιγμον*; literally, “he regarded not the being equal to God [as] ἄρπαιγμον, as a thing to be greedily sought or appropriated.

For these reasons, I cannot believe that our common Version gives the sense of the passage. And for similar reasons, I feel compelled to reject the Version, so common among some Unitarians; “He did not think of the robbery of being equal with God.” A conclusive objection to it is, that it translates ἄρπαιγμον here as designating the *action of robbery*; and that *οὐκ ἡγήσατο το εἶναι ἰσα θεῷ ἄρπαιγμον* can never be proved to mean, “He thought not of the robbery or *being equal* with God.” The verb *ἡγήσατο* is not susceptible of such a meaning, as is expressed by the Version *thought not of*; e. *did not aspire to, imagine, form expectations of, &c.* in its primary sense it signifies *to lead*; *to be pre-eminent, &c.*; in its secondary sense *to esteem, judge, regard, repute, &c.* To render *οὐκ ἡγήσατο ἄρπαιγμον*, *he did not think of the robbery*, would therefore be a violation of the first principles of Greek idiom, and of the meaning of words. To justify such a version, the passage must run thus, *οὐκ ἡγήσατο ΤΟΝ ἄρπαιγμον ΤΟΥ εἶναι ἰσα Θεῷ*.* And as no ancient Manuscript or Version has given a hint

* Even then *ἡγήσατο* could not be rendered, *thought not of*.

of such a reading, it seems to be placed beyond fair debate, that the translation now in question cannot be admitted.

Both our translators and Unitarians appear, generally, to have mistaken the import of the word *μορφή* in this passage. On the one hand, *μορφή* does not seem to me at all parallel with the *ἀπαύγασμα* and *χαρακτήρ*, which are applied to the Son, in Heb. i. 3. These represent the glory of the incarnate Messiah, who had appeared “in these last days,” and spoken to men. They express the same view of Christ which John gives, (i. 14.) when he says, “We beheld his (Christ’s) glory, verily the glory of the only begotten of the Father;” and this glory was seen after the ‘Word became flesh and dwelt among us.’ Comparison then of *μορφή Θεου* with these passages does not at all ascertain its meaning; for to Christ belonged the *μορφή Θεου* *before* he humbled himself and took upon him the form of a servant. In thus occupying indeed the condition of a servant, (if I may so express the Greek *ἐκένωσε σεαυτον*,) consisted his humiliation.

A fair examination of *μορφή*, either generally or in special relation to the passage before us, will end, as I must believe, in the conviction that the word is not unfrequently synonymous with *φύσις* (nature) and *οὐσία* (being.) The proofs which Schleusner has offered of this are sufficient; (Lex. in voc. *μορφή*.) But the proof of what it means in the passage before us, is too plain to be easily mistaken. If you say, *μορφή Θεου* means a similitude or resemblance of God in moral qualities, (as we speak of Christians resembling God;) then I ask, Did he lay aside this moral resemblance, when he became incarnate? For being in *μορφή Θεου*—*ἐκένωσε σεαυτον*; being in the *μορφή* of God, *he depressed himself*;

i. e. he submitted to assume a low condition. But in what sense were his moral qualities *depressed*?

Does *μορφη Θεου* mean resemblance to God, in respect to *office*; as magistrates are called *gods*? Then what office did he lay aside, in order to become incarnate? If Christ be only a created being; who were his subjects, and what was his dominion, before his mediatorial kingdom commenced by the event of his incarnation?

But this is not all. If *μορφη* mean only *similitude*; then what is the sense of the next clause, where Christ is said to have taken upon him the *μορphen δουλου*? That he bore merely a *resemblance* to a servant, (i. e. to *one who obeys*, or is in a humble station;) or that he did *actually* take the condition of one who was in a humble and depressed state, and persevere in it to the very death of the cross? The latter must be admitted, unless we rehearken to the doctrine of the Docetæ, who taught, that Christ was a man in *appearance* only, and not in reality. If *μορφη δουλου* then, means the condition or state of one who is humbled or depressed, and subjected to the command of others; *μορφη Θεου* must mean the condition or state of one who is truly divine.

After all; it should be sacredly remembered, that on such a subject as this, human language, (all made up of terms to express the ideas of finite and mutable beings about finite and mutable objects,) is of course incompetent fully to designate the mode of union between the divine and human nature. I must regard the language here and in all other passages, on this awful subject, as only *approximation* toward describing what exists in the Divinity, or is done by him. He who was in the condition of God, and equal with God, *εκενωσε σεαυτον*; i. e.

as we translate it, *exinanivit seipsum*, “made himself of no reputation.” Yet how incompetent must these translations be? So far as Christ is the immutable God, he cannot change; i. e. he cannot *divest himself* of his essential perfections. He cannot cease to be omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, &c. But he may veil the brightness of his glories for a time, by assuming to himself a union with the human nature, and making this the organ through which he displays his perfections, for the time of the incarnation. Does the sun cease to shine—are his beams extinguished, when an intervening cloud obscures, for a while, his lustre? Or is the sun in any measure changed?

We may ask then, (in reply to a multitude of questions, with which you and others press Trinitarians on this subject;) Because God is omnipotent does it follow, that the whole of that omnipotence must be every moment exerted? If not, (and who will refuse assent to this,) then why may he not have veiled his glories for a time in the incarnate Saviour, and still retain all his essential perfections, unchanged? He *may*; I believe the text in question decides that he *did*.

I approach such a subject however, with solemn awe; and never feel my own weakness and ignorance more intensely, than while endeavoring to think upon it. The familiar, I had almost said irreverential manner, in which some speak and write respecting this mystery, is calculated, I freely acknowledge, to excite painful emotions. On the one hand, it would seem, if we are to credit one mode of representation, that the greatest portion of Christ’s humiliation consisted in his having renounced and absolutely laid aside his divinity, for the time of the incarnation; and that *as God*, in this diminished condition, he did actually expire upon the cross. All the powers of

language are exhausted, in order to show how great must be the sufferings and condescension of Christ, in undergoing such a degradation as this.—On the other hand; some who revolt from these mistaken representations, verge to the other extreme. Lest they should degrade the divine nature of Christ, they are so careful to separate the human nature from it, that one is compelled to suppose, that the man Jesus had simply a higher degree of inspiration and communion with God than other prophets. The New Testament justifies neither of these extremes.

A thousand questions may be raised here; a thousand difficulties suggested, which no sober man will undertake to answer. The history of past ages exhibits an appalling picture of disputes about the person of Christ; all springing from the denial of facts revealed in the New Testament, or the unhallowed curiosity of men, who desired to know what God has not revealed. The very last age witnessed a dispute in Germany between the theologians of Giessen and Tubingen, whether the *κενωσις*, (humiliation) of Christ consisted “in abstinence from both the direct and reflex use of divine majesty:” or in the “occultation of divine majesty;” a dispute which agitated the Lutheran Church to the very centre.

The humble inquirer after truth, who once is brought clearly to see the boundaries of human knowledge, will shrink from disputations of such a nature; and pour forth his earnest supplications to God, that the simple verities which the Scriptures reveal, may be believed on the authority of God; while the manner in which the facts exist, that are revealed for our credence, is left with him “whose ways are unsearchable and whose judgments are past finding out.”

I have used the freedom of letter-writing, in this discussion; I can hardly call it digression, as it is so nearly connected with the explanation of the text which I am examining. Will you now permit me to repeat, that the version, which would correspond best with my apprehension of the real meaning of the passage in question, is, "Who being of divine nature, or condition, did not eagerly seek to retain his equality with God, but took on himself a humble condition," &c. In this way, and in this only, is the passage consistent with, at least appropriate to, the apostle's argument and design; and in this way only can the Greek be fairly and grammatically rendered.

With the passage that has now been considered, seem to me to agree, as to general import, such texts as these: John v. 19. "Whatsoever things he (the Father) doeth, the same doeth the Son likewise;" i. e. he has the same power as the Father. And when it is said in the context, "The Son doeth nothing by (or of *απο, αφ'*) himself, except he see the Father do it;" I understand the meaning to be, that the Jews had no reason to believe that Christ had any disposition to blaspheme God, (of which they had so frequently accused him,) for that he acted in entire concert with the divine purposes and commands, and had no separate interests of his own.

John v. 21—23. "For as the Father raiseth the dead and restores them to life, so also the Son restores to life whom he pleases. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, that all men might honour the Son, even as they honour the Father."

Here I find an equality of power and honour ascribed to the Father and Son. The Son is indeed introduced as Mediator; as head over all things to the church: but could

he be such a head ; could all “ judgment be committed to him,” if at the same time he was not also divine, and consequently omniscient ? It is perfectly plain, that in so far as the “ committing of judgment to the Son” is concerned, it must be to the mediatorial person ; to one who in respect to office is subordinate to God. But in so far as the *qualifications* requisite to perform the duties, which that *commitment* requires, are concerned, the Saviour is divine ; and the honor to be claimed by him is the same with that which the Divinity himself claims. It matters not whether you interpret this of the obedience to be rendered to the Son, or the homage to be paid him. Multitudes of prophets have acted as the messengers of God, and have borne his messages of mercy and of judgment to his people ; but to whom among them all did he grant the privilege of being honored as himself ? Or to what created being shall the glory of the blessed God be rendered, without infringing upon the fundamental principles of either the Jewish or Christian religion ?

In fact, I cannot well conceive how our Saviour could have used these words, without having exposed himself to renewed accusations of the Jews for blaspheming, unless he were really divine. The Jews had just accused him of violating the Sabbath, because he had healed on that day, the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda. The reply of Christ to them was ; “ My Father worketh hitherto, and I work :” which, if I understand the argument, must mean, ‘ My Father has never ceased to work on the Sabbath,’ in carrying on all the operations of the natural and moral world ; he supersedes the law of the Sabbath. I have the same right. “ The Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath.” The Jews then sought to slay

him, not only because, as they affirmed, " he had violated the Sabbath, but said that God was his Father ; *making himself equal with God.*" In reply to their bitter accusations, Jesus made use of the language above cited ; telling them that he did whatever the Father did, and was entitled to the same honour. Was this relinquishing his claim to the equality with God, which the Jews had charged him with assuming ? Or was it speaking out plainly, that he wrought on the Sabbath by the same right that the Father did, and was entitled to the same deference ? Can his words, interpreted without regard to any preconceived theory, be made to signify less than this ?

You will expect me, perhaps, to adduce John x. 30. " I and my Father are one."—It is a clear case, that the Jews understood Christ here, as claiming equality with God, or rather claiming to be God. (See verse 33.) But I am not satisfied, that the manner in which they often expounded his words, is a sure guide for our interpretation at the present time. The malignant disposition which they frequently displayed, may well lead us to suspect, that they would, if possible, put such a construction on his words, as would subject him to the imputation of blasphemy, or rebellion against the Roman government. I would expound the words of Christ therefore, independently of any construction which his embittered enemies put upon them. And in the present case, it seems to me, that the meaning of " I and my Father are one," is simply, " I and my Father are united in counsel, design, and power."

So in John xvii. 20, 21 ; Christ prays that " all who shall believe on him *may be one.* As thou, Father," continues he, " art in me, and I in thee ; so they also *may be*

one in us ;” i. e. that the disciples may have the “same mind which was in Christ Jesus ;” may copy after his example, and be united in the temper of their souls to him, as he is to God ; *may be one* with the Father and with him.

So also, in Gal. iii. 28 ; Christians of different ranks and nations are said to *be one* in Christ ; and 1 Cor. iii. 8, he that planteth and he that watereth *are one* ; i. e. they have the same affections, and designs ; they are united to accomplish the same object. In the same manner Cicero says, “Unus fiat e pluribus,” when persons are united in temper and pursuits. (De Offic. l. i. c. 17.)

From the consideration of those texts, which ascribe equality with God ; or divine power and honours to Christ, in a general sense ; let us now turn,

III. To the examination of those which assert or imply particular divine attributes, or works, to him.

1. *Omniscience is ascribed to Christ.*

Matt. xi. 27. “All things are delivered unto me of my Father ; and no man knoweth the Son but the Father ; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.”

If the same knowledge of the most recondite and difficult subjects ; in a word, the same *omniscience*, be not ascribed in this passage to the Son as to the Father ; I am unable to make out what the meaning of it is. And in the latter clause of the verse, men are declared to be dependent entirely on the Son, for that knowledge of the Father which is revealed ; i. e. he only is capable of making this revelation. “No man hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten who dwelleth in the bosom of the Father, *he hath revealed him.*” John i. 18.

John vi. 46. Ουχ ὅτι τον πατερα τις ἑωρακεν, εἰ μη ὁ ὢν παρα του θεου· οὗτος ἑωρακε τον πατερα. “Because that

no man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father." The word *ἑώρακε* here, does not mean *to see with bodily eyes*, but *with the mental eye*, i. e. to know. What but omniscience could be adequate to the knowledge, which is here predicated by Christ of himself?

In the same manner, the knowledge of the most intimate secrets of the human heart is ascribed to Christ. John ii. 24, 25. "But Jesus did not commit himself unto them because he knew all men; and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man." John vi. 64. "But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him." Acts i. 24. "And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen." That *Lord* (*Κυριος*) here means *Christ*, seems to me very plain from verses 21 and 22, (compare verse 6) of the context. Besides, this is the *common* appellation of the Saviour in the Acts of the Apostles. The appeal too, in this case, is made respecting the *choice of an apostle*. "Shew, Lord," say the apostles, "which of these two *THOU* hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and *apostleship*." Is there, (separately from party feelings,) any room to doubt here, that the Apostles did appeal to the same Lord who had chosen them, to designate who should fill the vacancy occasioned by the death of Judas?

1 Cor. iv. 4, 5. "For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels

of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God." That *Lord* (Κυριος) here means Christ, is plain both from the office of Judging ascribed to him, and from his *coming* to judgment. Without citing the numerous other passages, which confessedly represent Christ as the final Judge of all the human race; permit me here to ask, Is it possible for any being who is not *omniscient*, to judge the universe of intelligent creatures? Can he, for thousands of years, (possibly of ages,) be present every where, and know what is transacted; can he penetrate the recesses of the human heart; can he remember the whole character and actions of countless myriads so diverse in talents, temper, circumstances and situation; and yet be finite? be neither *omnipresent* nor *omniscient*? God claims it as his distinguishing and peculiar prerogative, that he knows the secrets of the human heart, (Jer. xvii. 10;) what then must he be, who knows the secrets of all hearts, at all times, and in all worlds? If he be not God, the proof that the Father is God, is defective too; and we have the question again to dispute with the Manicheans, whether Jehovah be not a limited and imperfect being.

"But," you will say, "Christ acts as Judge by delegated authority; why not then by knowledge imparted to him?" He does indeed *act* as judge, by delegated authority; because it is in his mediatorial capacity that he acts as Judge: but to *act* as Judge is one thing, to be *qualified* for such an office is another. Exaltation as Mediator constitutes him judge in that capacity; *omniscience*, and *omniscience only* can qualify him for the duties of that station. And can *omniscience* be *imparted*? We may as well say *omnipotence*, or *self-existence* can be imparted, as *omniscience*. There is, and there can be but

one God; and a second omniscient being—omniscient simply by knowledge *imparted*, would force us into all the absurdities of polytheism.

Rev. ii. 23. "And all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works." The same person speaks here, who "was dead and is alive;" (Chap. i. 18;) i. e. Christ. The sense of the passage is too plain to need any comment.

To conclude this head: when I compare such passages as those above cited, with the description of omniscience as belonging to God; how can I doubt that the New Testament writers mean to ascribe the knowledge of all things to Christ? To say that whatsoever pertains to God or man, is known by any being, is to affirm of that being, that he is *omniscient*. Compare now with this, the appropriate knowledge which God ascribes to himself only, in Jer. xvii. 9, 10; "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."

2. *Divine power is ascribed to Christ.*

Phil. iii. 21. "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

Compare now with this passage, 1 Cor. xv. 26—28, where the same language is applied to God the Father. And if to be able "to subdue all things to himself," (*ὑποτάξαι τὰ πάντα ἑαυτῷ*), be not characteristic of omnipotence in Phil. iii. 21, when applied to Christ, why should it be when applied to the Father in Corinthians?

Heb. i. 3. Ὁς (ὡν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ, φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυναμεως αὐτοῦ,) δι' ἑαυτοῦ καθάρισμον ποιήσαμενος τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς. “Who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.” The word φέρων, which is translated *upholding*, means *preserving, directing, governing*. Thus Chrysostom; φέρων, says he, κυβερνῶν, διαπιπτοντα συγκρατῶν. So the corresponding Hebrew word כָּשָׁל, Is. xlv. 3. lxiii. 9.

In John x. 16, Christ says, “he has power to lay down his life, and to resume it again.” In other places, the resurrection of Jesus is ascribed to God; Acts ii. 24, 32.—iii. 15.—v. 30.—1 Cor. vi. 14,—xv. 15.

In 2 Pet. i. 3, (θεῖα δύναμις,) *divine* power is ascribed to Christ; compare verse 16.

Most decisive however, of divine Power belonging to Christ, are those passages above, which ascribe to him the creation of the universe. This is the distinguishing characteristic of Jehovah. Jer. x. 10—16. “But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting King: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide his indignation. Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion. When he uttereth his voice there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of

the earth ; he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures. Every man is brutish in his knowledge ; every founder is confounded by the graven image : for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them. They are vanity, and the work of errors : in the time of their visitation they shall perish. The portion of Jacob is not like them : for he is the former of all things ; and Israel is the rod of his inheritance : The Lord of hosts, is his name."

Acts xiv. 15. "Sirs, why do ye these things ? we also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you, that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein."

Whatever views any one may entertain, who reads, and compares such passages with the creative power ascribed to Christ ; I cannot but admit, with the apostle, "that he who *built* all things is God."

3. ETERNITY is ascribed to Christ.

That those passages of Scripture, which speak of Christ's existence before the creation of the world, do not explicitly assert his eternity, I have already suggested. But then, it is difficult to conceive that they do not *imply* eternity. "For," says Doederlein, (Inst. Theol. i. p. 390,) "to exist before the beginning of the world, what can it mean but to exist from eternity?" Passages of this nature are the following ; viz., John i. 1. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." 1 John i. 2. "For the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." John xvii. 5. "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with

the glory which I had with thee before the world was." John xvii. 24. "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

But most specially do I feel, that Rev. xxii. 13 is decisive on this subject. *Εγω το Α και το Ω, ὁ πρωτος και ὁ εσχατος, ἡ αρχη και το τελος.* That it is Christ who speaks here, is clear; for 1. In the preceding verse he says, "Behold I come quickly." 2. In the sixteenth verse, the same person says, "I Jesus, have sent mine angel," &c. Now the same description is given of the eternity of God, in Chap. xxi. 5, 6; compare verses 7th and 3d. To know still more fully, what this formula of expression means, we must recur to the old Testament, where we have it, divested of its technical shape. In Is. xliv. 6, Jehovah says, "I am the first, and I am the last; and besides me there is no god;" i. e. eternity distinguishes me from all that are falsely called gods. So in Isaiah xlvi. 12, after declaring that he will not suffer his name to be polluted, nor give his glory to another, he adds, "I am he, (i. e. the true God,) I am the first; and I also am the last."

Now if the same assertion be made of Christ, (as it plainly is,) how can we avoid the conclusion that the holy apostle meant to assert his *eternal* existence?

4. *Divine honours and worship are paid to Christ.*

John v. 23. "That all men might honour the Son even as they honour the Father." On this text I have before remarked, (page 95,) in another connexion.

Heb. i. 6. "Let all the angels of God worship him."

The word *worship*, it is said, has two significations; viz. *obeisance* and *spiritual homage*. This is no doubt

true ; and the first of these meanings often presents itself in the Old Testament, and (as I am willing to concede,) in the Gospels. Many who worshipped Christ, (that is, prostrated themselves before him, while he sojourned among men,) probably knew or acknowledged nothing of his divine nature. But what shall we say of the *angels* ? Are they ignorant of his true nature ? And at all events, is not the worship, which they who are pure spirits can pay, of course of a *spiritual* nature, and not simple obeisance ?

Phil. ii. 10, 11. "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Things in heaven, earth, and under the earth, is a common periphrasis of the Hebrew and New Testament writers for the *universe* ; (*το παν*, or *τα παντα*.) What can be meant, by things in heaven bowing the knee to Jesus, if spiritual worship be not meant ? What other worship can heaven render ? And if their worship of Christ be spiritual, is not that of others, who are united with them, to be spiritual also ? And when it is added, "to the glory of God the Father ;" I understand the sentiment to be, that Jesus in his mediatorial character is the object of universal adoration ; but as this character has a peculiar connexion with and relation to God the Father, so the worship paid to Christ the Mediator, should redound to the Father as well as himself, and the Father should be glorified by it.

Rom. x. 9—14. "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be

saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?"

The name of the Lord, *on whom they are to call*, is plainly Christ; for it is the same in whom *they are to believe*, (verses 11 and 14.) And this Lord, (Christ) on whom they are to call, and in whom they are to believe, is *Κυριος παντων*, *universal Lord*, and therefore able to bestow the blessings which they need.

Rev. v. 8—14. "And when he (i.e. Christ, see v. 6, 7,) took the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and bless-

ing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever."

If this be not spiritual worship—and if Christ be not the object of it here as God; I must confess myself unable to produce any case, where worship can be called spiritual and divine.

The apostles and primitive martyrs worshipped Christ; and they recognize the practice of worshipping him among other Christians.

Acts vii. 59, 60. "And they stoned Stephen, making invocation (*επικαλουμενον*) and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this he fell asleep."

Now here is a dying martyr, who is expressly said to "be filled with the Holy Ghost," and to enjoy the vision of the heavenly world, and of the Saviour who was there; in his last decisive moments, too, on the very verge of eternity; here is such a martyr, committing his departing spirit into the hands of the Lord Jesus, in the very same language, and with the same confidence that Jesus committed his spirit into the hands of the Father, when expiring upon the cross. This expiring disciple also, implores forgiveness for his murderers. Of whom does he implore it? Of the same Lord Jesus. Can the trust of a departing spirit, and the forgiveness of sin be committed to any being who has not omnipotence, and supreme

authority? And can a dying martyr, with his eyes fixed on the very visions of God, and his soul filled with the Holy Ghost, ask and pray amiss?

2 Cor. xii. 8, 9. Ὑπερ τουτου τρις τον κυριον παρεκαλεσα, ινα αποστη απ' εμου· και ειρηκε μοι· Αρκει σοι ἡ χαρις μου· ἡ γαρ δυναμις μου εν ασθενεια τελειουται. Ἡδιστα ουν μαλλον καυχησομαι εν ταις ασθενειαις μου, ινα επισκηνωση επ' εμε ἡ δυναμις του Χριστου. "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

The *Lord* whom Paul *besought* here is plainly Christ; for this same Lord, in answer to the apostle's supplication, says, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength (ἡ δυναμις μου) is perfected in weakness." Then the apostle immediately subjoins; "Most gladly then would I rejoice in my infirmities, that the *strength of CHRIST* (ἡ δυναμις Χριστου,) may rest upon me." A clearer case that Christ was the object of the apostle's repeated prayer, cannot well be presented.

1 Thess. iii. 11, 12. "Now, God himself, and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you. And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you."

Can any distinction be here made, between the supplication addressed to God and to Christ?

2 Thess. ii. 16, 17. "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, Comfort your hearts and stablish you in every good word and work,"

Here the order of the persons to whom supplication is made, is the reverse of that in the last instance quoted; which shows that nothing depends on the *order*, but that it was a matter of indifference with the apostle, which was placed first, the supplication being equally addressed to the Father and to Christ.

“Rom. i. 7. “To all that be in Rome, beloved of God; called to be saints; Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Here the same blessings are solicited and expected from Christ and the Father. See the same formula repeated 1 Cor. i. 3.—2 Cor. i. 2.

Acts i. 24. “And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen.”

That *Lord* here means the Lord Jesus, seems evident from verses 21 and 22. It is the usual appellation, moreover, which the book of Acts gives to the Saviour. (See above p. 99).

2 Tim. iv. 14. “The Lord reward him according to his works!” Again verses 17 and 18; “Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.” (Compare iii. 11.) Usage hardly admits a doubt here, that *Lord* means Christ.

Nor can I separate from religious invocation, trust, and confidence, such expressions as these; (Acts iii. 1.) “Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ

of Nazareth, rise up and walk." Nor can I see how the solemn adjuration, *εν χριστω*, (by Christ) which the apostle uses, Rom. ix. 1—1 Tim. ii. 7, can be separated from religious invocation, or appeal.

We must add to all these instances of worship, the fact that Christians were so habituated to address their supplications to Christ, that "They who invoke Christ," became, it would seem, a kind of proper name, by which they were in primitive times designated.

Thus Paul (1 Cor. i. 2.) addresses himself to all *επικαλουμενους το ονομα του κυριου ημων Ιησου Χριστου, εν παντι τοπω*, *who invoke the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*, IN EVERY PLACE. That the verb *επικαλεω* is an appropriate one to designate the act of prayer, will not be questioned. The literal translation of it is *to invoke*. The simple meaning of the passage is "I address myself to all Christians;" but instead of using this name directly, the apostle uses a periphrasis, and says, *to all the invokers of Christ*, i. e. those who pray to him, meaning the same as *αγιοις, κλητοις*, &c. in the context. He has signified too, that the practice of *invoking Christ*, was not confined to Corinth, but was extended *to every place*; *εν παντι τοπω*.

Exactly in the same manner does Ananias describe Christians, when the Lord Jesus bade him go to instruct and comfort Saul. "Lord," said he, "I have heard of many concerning this man, what things he has done, (*τοις αγιοις σου*,) to thy saints at Jerusalem; and even now, he has a commission from the high priest, to bind all (*τους επικαλουμενους το ονομα σου*,) those who invoke thy name," i. e. Christians. See the same thing repeated, verse 21st.

The very heathen, in the primitive age of Christian-

ity, little as they knew about Christians, discovered that they made Christ an object of worship. Says Pliny in writing to Trajan, "Carmen Christo, quasi Deo, solitissent, (i. e. Christiani,) dicere secum invicem. (Lib. 10. Epis. 97.) "They, (Christians) sing in social worship a hymn to Christ as a God."

Eusebius too, (Ecc. Hist. v. 28,) appeals against the Artemonites to the ancient songs of Christians, thus; "Whatever psalms and hymns were composed by faithful brethren, from the beginning, *praise Christ the Word of God.*" Can any example of a church in the apostolic age, who did not practise thus, be found?

Did not the Saviour give his disciples a general precept and encouragement, to make him the object of prayer? "If ye shall ask any thing in my name," said he to the apostles, "I will accomplish it," (*ἐγὼ ποιήσω.*) John xiv. 13, 14. They appear to me to have understood this, as directing that he should be regarded as the special object of prayer. Hence, instead of finding few or no examples of prayer to Christ, in the history of the primitive Christians in the New Testament, I find more of this kind, than of any other.

When I have contemplated the precepts which encourage prayer to Christ, and the worship of him, both by the inhabitants of the heavenly world, and by the Churches on earth; I then compare these things with the exclusive worship and trust, which Jehovah claims to himself." Is. xlv. 22, 23. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." Is. xlii. 8. "I am the Lord; that is my name;

and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." Jer. xvii. 5—7. "Thus saith the Lord, cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord: For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." Matth. iv. 10. "Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and HIM ONLY shalt thou serve."

I am ready now to ask, whether I can avoid coming to the conclusion, either that Christ is truly divine, in as much as he is so often represented as the object of worship; or that the sacred writers have mistaken this great point, and led us to that which must be considered as idolatry. And yet the worship of Christ is placed, as it would seem, in contradistinction to that of idols, 1 Cor. viii. 4—6. That Christianity renounces utterly and forever all idolatry—all polytheism—in a word, every thing inconsistent with the worship of one only living and true God, is a point so plain and so universally conceded, that I shall not dwell for a moment upon it.

Thus have I endeavoured to show, that the New Testament bestows upon Christ the appellation of God, accompanied by such adjuncts as naturally, (not to say necessarily,) lead us to understand this word, in its highest sense; that it attributes to him equality with God; that it represents him as the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of the universe; declares his omniscience, his omnipotence, and his eternity; and both by precepts and examples exhibits Christ as the object of prayer and di-

vine worship, by the Church in heaven and on earth. To these conclusions do the plain rules of exegesis necessarily conduct me. I am sensible of the allegations, which are frequently made, that we receive our systems of belief from the Creeds and Confessions of faith, which have descended from former unenlightened and superstitious, or philosophizing ages. That some of our *phraseology* has been derived from men, who *sometimes* speculated too boldly, and substituted names for ideas; I am ready to concede. I feel the embarrassments, that on account of this are occasionally thrown in the way of inculcating truth, at the present time. Men are very apt to suppose, that if you throw away the old *terms*, or *names*, you reject the old ideas also. Yet it can be only superficial thinkers, that will soberly believe this. It is in general therefore, a sufficient reason with me for dismissing phraseology, when it must, almost of necessity, be misunderstood by the great body of men. Yet, a sudden and entire revolution, in this respect, would be very undesirable; because such a revolution must again lead, of necessity, at first, to other misapprehensions. I am willing therefore, to retain many terms, which have become venerable for their antiquity, that I should reject without hesitation, if they were now presented *de novo*.

Excepting the influence which Creeds and Confessions exercise over my *phraseology*, (and that in a modified manner as stated above,) I am not conscious of being led to the adoption of Trinitarian views, or to the ascription of true and proper Divinity to Christ, by any Creed, or any human authority on earth. My sole business for these ten years past, has been the study of the Bible; and the study of it, in the daily use of those principles of exegesis, which you have for the most part, so

briefly and so happily described. I began this study with a desire to know what the Bible has taught. I have pursued it with the same desire, or rather with such a desire greatly increased; with unabated ardour. I have limited my studies to no class of writers; but have solicitously endeavoured to seek for truth, and to receive it thankfully, from whatever quarter it might come. In particular; at least three quarters of my time have been spent among writers of the Unitarian class, from whom I have received with gratitude much instruction relative to the philology, the exegesis, and the literary history of the Scriptures. I have long been in the habit of rejecting any explanation of the Scriptures, that is not founded upon the principles of exegesis which you have developed. Whether an *orthodox* or *heterodox* use could be made of this or that interpretation, is what I endeavour habitually to lay out of view, when I interpret the Scriptures. The simple question which I desire to place before me is; "What has God said? What has Christ taught?" Guided by the fundamental principles of explanation in all languages, I inquire for this; and when I am satisfied as to what the Bible has declared, I regard it as the decision of heaven and true *orthodoxy*.

I do not, indeed, regard the opinions of great and good men, in past ages, as unworthy of attention, or even reverence. If I read them with a proper temper of mind, there are few of them but can be read with profit. The reasonings of Athanasius and Augustine I can read with great pleasure; so I can those of Calvin and Edwards. But I adopt no opinion because they adopted it. The *reasons* of their opinion are the object of my investigation; it is of but little interest to me, to know simply that they believed this or that doctrine. And

with the very same object, I read the opponents of these great men. I can say with truth, that much more of my reading life has been spent among the opponents of my sentiments, than among the friends of them. Can you make the same affirmation?

After all; it is a principle by which, if I have any knowledge of my own heart, I desire forever to be guided, to "call no man master, on earth." I would place the decisions of Scripture, fairly made out, *IMMEASURABLY ABOVE all human opinions*. The difference seems to me to be that which exists between the decisions of an unerring God, and those of fallible men.

It is with such views and principles of reasoning, that I have come to the conclusions which have been developed in these letters. And were it not that I fear to become tedious, by detailing my reasons for believing in the divine nature of Christ, I should add a great number of texts, which require us with all the heart to *love* him; to *obey* him; to *confide* in him; and to *commit ourselves* to him; in such manner as I can never persuade myself to do, with respect to any being who is not God. The New Testament represents my consolation, my privilege, and my happiness to be derived from trusting in Christ. But can I confide in a *finite* being, when I have an *infinite, almighty, all-sufficient* GOD, to whom I may go? Will you make me contented with a mite, when I can have the mines of Peru at my disposal?

I should also add those texts, and some very striking, (not to say in my view unanswerable) ones, where, in the New Testament, the very same things are applied to Christ, which in the Old Testament are affirmed of Jehovah. I will merely put down a few references of this nature, which it will be easy to compare.

Is. vi. 5—10, compared with John xii. 37—41.

Mal. iii. 1,

Mark i. 2.

Ps. lxxviii. 56,

1 Cor. x. 9.

And now, in concluding this letter, permit me to say ; That as reason does not and cannot decide against the doctrine of the Trinity as explained in my second Letter ; nor against the union of the divine and human natures in Christ ; the question whether these are truths or not, rests solely on the decision of revelation. What then is that decision ? This question I have already endeavoured to answer.

I will now acknowledge, that I was induced to undertake the above examination, in consequence of the challenge which you make, (p. 9,) in the following words ; “ We challenge our opponents, to adduce *one* passage in the New Testament, where the word *God* unless turned from its usual sense by the connexion, does not mean the Father.” I have accepted this challenge, not I hope in the spirit of contest, but with the desire of contributing, so far as lies in my power, to develope what the New Testament does teach. I have laboured to show, that the very reason above all other reasons, why I believe Christ to be truly divine, is *because the connexion, when he is called God, ascribes to him such attributes and works, as leaves me no room to doubt that the New Testament writers meant to assert his proper divinity.*

In p. 14, (after stating your apprehensions in regard to the doctrine that Christ has two natures, the belief of which, you affirm, is “ an enormous tax on human credulity,”) you say, “ I am aware, that these remarks will be met by two or three texts, in which Christ is called God, and by a class of passages, not very numerous, in which divine properties are said to be ascribed to him.” Whe-

ther the number of texts, in which Christ is called God, amounts to no more than *two* or *three*, it would be superfluous now to inquire, when they lie before us, and can easily be counted. Whether also, the "class of passages" is "not very numerous, in which divine properties are said to be ascribed to him," can be judged of in the same way. But, my dear Sir, what is it to the purpose, (I ask again,) whether the passages are more or less numerous, which relate to the doctrine in question? It is too late for you and I to rest our faith upon the number of passages that inculcate a doctrine, after we have conceded the Bible to be of divine authority. The simple question is, what do those passages mean, according to the rules of interpretation in all other cases? This being ascertained, only two courses are before us; the *one*, to receive their meaning as the guide of our faith; the other to reject their authority, and deny our obligation to believe the decisions of the Scripture. If the N. Test. does teach that Christ is not really divine, but a finite creature, and this can be made out by an unbiassed interpretation of it; I will either receive this doctrine, receive it implicitly, (for, if I am not deceived in respect to myself, I only desire to know what God has taught, in order to believe it;) or else I will reject all claims to inspiration in the sacred writers, and follow their instructions only so far as they coincide with my own speculations. I am fully satisfied there is no middle path here, and that a man who investigates for himself, extensively and independently, must eventually follow one or the other of the courses pointed out.

Convince me then, that you apply the rules of interpretation which you have laid down, in an unbiassed manner; that you have looked on all sides of these great

questions with an impartial eye, reading the advocates of different sentiments; that you have never admitted a sense of injury or the feeling of party to sway you in your representations of our sentiments; and that the New Testament does clearly teach, that Jesus is not, and cannot be divine, when explained by the plain and indisputable laws of exegesis; and you will make me a convert to the doctrines, (at least some of them,) which you embrace. Where the apostles lead me, I will go; or else renounce all deference to them. I will cherish too, a grateful remembrance, while I have a being, of any man or men, who shall convince me by sound reasoning, that I am in an error and am wandering from the paths of life.

But you will allow me to say, what you will doubtless affirm of yourself; "I cannot be convinced, until I am satisfied that my principles of interpretation are wrong, and my application of them erroneous." You have described, (p. 14,) in what manner you avoid the conclusions drawn from those texts which call Christ *God*, and which apparently ascribe divine attributes to him. On the principles of exegesis there disclosed, I shall remark in another letter. I will at present say only, that they appear to me far from being as certain as those which I have quoted in my first letter.

Your candor will easily concede, that the positions which I have just laid down are correct, and such as become every sincere lover of truth. I am very ready to grant, that we ought not to expect to produce conviction in the minds of you and your friends, by using reproachful epithets, or severe appellations. We cannot convince you, by appealing to our Fathers, or their Creeds; to the ancient Fathers of the Church, or any

body of men whatever. You may always reply to us, 'Are not men fallible? And have not the best of uninspired men cherished some errors? Give us the *reasons* why our Fathers received the doctrines in question, and then we will hear you; the fact that they did receive them is a part of Church history, but certainly no theological argument. The papal hierarchy is supported by the Fathers; and there never has been a sect in Christendom, who could not, sooner or later, make an appeal to the Fathers whom they respected.'

Nor can we convince you by a tenacious and unreasonable opposition to all critical examination of the texts of the N. Testament, or critical investigation and study; or by a forced and mystical explanation of various passages, and converting them to the support of sentiments which they never were designed to support. The sound rules of interpretation will soon sweep away every vestige of such defective views of the word of God; and orthodoxy must stand or fall, by the simple decision of the Scriptures, interpreted according to the general laws of language.

On the other hand;—you will as cheerfully concede too, that we ought not to be convinced by calling us hard names; by misrepresenting our sentiments; by proving that Calvin helped to burn Servetus; by affirming that our sentiments come from Creeds and Confessions of human authority, fabricated by superstition and philosophy; by representing us as gloomy, superstitious, malignant, and unsocial; by appropriating to Unitarians all that is kind and noble and generous and exalted, and leaving to us the opposites of these virtues; by affirming that we are desirous of infringing Christian liberty and establishing an Inquisition to defend our sentiments, and exhorting

others to resist such tyranny ; or by representing us as admitting in words, that God is kind and paternal, while we think meanly of him, and treat him as the heathen did their Jupiter. Such things may add fuel to the fire of controversy ; but can the lover of truth, and of the word of God be convinced by them ? They are the arts indeed of controversialists—and arts like them, I am sorry to say, are not confined to any one party. Passion has more control over disputants than they are aware of. Zeal for what they believe to be truth is what they think inspires them ; while perhaps their words, or the spirit of their representations “ breath out threatenings ” if not “ slaughter ” to their opponents. I hardly dare trust myself to write this paragraph, lest I should catch the spirit while I am describing it. I know in some measure how frail I am ; but I think I do sincerely disapprove of such a spirit, in whatever party it may be found.

In consulting writers of different views and sentiments, one is grieved to find that this spirit is limited to no party. I have seen it even in many great and good men. I feel that there is reason to tremble for myself, possessed of feelings naturally ardent, that I may in some respect or other transgress in these letters, and hinder something of the conviction which they otherwise might possibly produce, in the minds of some.

In one thing, we shall certainly be agreed. The sober inquirer after truth, must be convinced by reason and argument. All else is nothing to him. And where these lead him, he will go. The path of truth is the path of duty. The approbation of God, for a sincere, candid, simple, honest, believing heart, is worth infinitely more than all the honor which party zeal can bestow, or the world is able to give.

POSTSCRIPT.

AFTER finishing the above letter, your "Note for the second Edition" came to hand. But as most which it contains had already, as it seemed to me, been anticipated; I did not think it of importance to change the shape of the letter, and adapt it to your Note as well as Sermon. I was still less inclined to this, because I had endeavoured, as far as possible to avoid giving any personal shape to the controversy; knowing how bitter and irrelevant to the original subject, all personal controversies soon become. I may truly say here, "I seek not you, but yours;" i. e. I have not the most distant design of saying any thing which shall wound your personal sensibility; but I do feel, and I ought to feel a deep interest in addressing the understanding and reason of a man, who by his weight of character, sobriety of mind, and eminent talents, has acquired so much influence in Society as you have. And in order to do this with propriety, I have endeavoured, as far as possible, to throw the whole subject into the shape of a discussion respecting principles, and to avoid that form of writing which involves personal reflection.

Will you now permit me, in this informal way, to add a few things which the perusal of your Note has suggested to me?

I am unable to reconcile the first passage of your Note, with another in the body of your Sermon. In the former you say; "We are told, by Trinitarians, that Jesus Christ is the supreme God, the same Being as the Father, and that a leading end of Christianity is to reveal him in this character." In the latter you say; "According to this doctrine, (i. e. the doctrine of the Trinity,) there are three infinite and equal persons, possessing supreme divinity, called the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Each of these persons, as described by theologians, has his own particular consciousness, will, and perceptions. They love each other, converse with each other, and delight in each other's society. They perform different parts in man's redemption, each having his appropriate office, and neither doing the work of the other. The Son is mediator, and not the Father. The Father sends the Son, and is not himself sent; nor is he conscious, like the Son, of taking flesh. Here then, we have three intelligent agents, possessed of different consciousnesses, different wills, and different perceptions, per-

forming different acts, and sustaining different relations ; and if these things do not imply and constitute three minds or beings, we are utterly at a loss to know how three minds or beings are to be formed."

I cannot see how Trinitarians maintain that Jesus Christ is the *same Being as the Father*, when a prominent trait of their doctrine is, that there is a *distinction* between him and the Father ; which you yourself represent as amounting to as high a distinction as exists between two different men.

Nor can I see the propriety of the remark in your Note, that if Christ were "the same being as the Father, we should expect to hear him continually spoken of as the Supreme God." For *first* ; are we to take the book of God as it is ; or are we to insist that it must be conformed to our *expectations* ? And *secondly* ; if Christ was truly man, (a point as certain, as that Christ ever existed,) and was conversant in the *human nature* with men ; how, in a book which gives us the history of what he said and did during his *incarnation*, should we expect to hear him *continually* spoken of as the *Supreme God* ? The reasonableness of such an expectation seems to be at least, very questionable.

In truth, the Sacred writers do not appear to me to write as controversialists, on the subject of Christ's divinity. It is the way with men, who have extravagant views of the importance of any particular subject, to be ever dwelling upon it and taking occasion to introduce it as often as possible. Thus I have heard some preachers, who will not utter a single public discourse, or offer a single prayer without letting it be seen of all men, that they are *champions* for the doctrine of the Trinity. I have heard others, who never fail to let their hearers know that they are emancipated from the thralldom of the dark ages ; have thrown off the shackles of Creeds and Confessions, and forms imposed by ignorant and bigoted men ; that they are rational, enlightened and *reasonable* Christians ; and who exhort their audience to become their imitators. The holy apostles however possessed as I must believe, none of the spirit which prompts to either of these courses. They did not view subjects in a distorted and sectarian light. The edifice of truth—the temple of the living God, rose under their hands not only into a lofty and magnificent structure, but into one which was as conspicuous for *symmetry* as for grandeur.

All parts of Christian doctrine held their proper place in the system which they taught. Why should they then be *continually* speaking of Christ as the supreme God, when (as I verily believe,) they expected

no professed follower of Christ to call this doctrine in question. John seems to have had opponents to it in his eye, when he penned the first verse of his gospel: but excepting this, I do not remember another passage of the New Testament which has the aspect of opposition to gain-sayers, in respect to the divinity of Christ. The Apostles doubtless expected to be believed, when they had *once* plainly asserted any thing. That they are not, is indeed to be lamented: but it cannot be charged to their fault. They felt, (what we feel now,) that very frequent and strong asseverations of any thing is apt to produce a suspicion in the minds of a hearer or reader, either that the person making them has not arguments to rely upon, and so substitutes confident affirmations; or that he is himself but imperfectly satisfied with the cause which he defends; or that he has sinister motives in view. For myself, I confess I am inclined to suspect a man of all these, who makes very frequent and confident asseverations.

I am the more satisfied then, that the New Testament treats the subject in question, as one which was not controverted; and as one which was not expected to be called in question. My conclusion from the apostles' mode of treating it, is, I acknowledge, quite different from that which you draw, as stated in your Sermon and Notes. But with my present views, I must think it to be more probable than yours.

In regard to what follows in your Note, most of it has been anticipated. I will touch upon only a few points.

With respect to the passages which we adduce in proof of Christ's divine nature, you observe that the "strength of the Trinitarian argument lies in those, in which Jesus is called God." This may be true; but it lies in them, as I have from the first endevoured to show, not simply because the name God is given to him; but because those things are ascribed to him as God, which no being but the Supreme God can perform. *My whole argument is constructed on this ground.* Your whole Note, on the ground that we draw our conclusion simply from the fact, that the appellation *God* is given to Christ.

What you say of Matt. i. 23, so far as it respects the argument in favour of Christ's divine nature from *the name given him*, perfectly accords with my views. It is a very fallacious argument on which many Trinitarians have imprudently rested, when they maintain that the name *Immanuel* proves the doctrine in question. Jerusalem is called "Jehovah our righteousness;" is Jerusalem therefore *divine*?

Why should you say, in the third paragraph of your note, that in

looking through "Matthew, Mark, & Luke, you meet with no instance in which Christ is called God?"—Are there no proofs here of his omniscience, of his omnipotence, of his authority to forgive sin, of his supreme, legislative right? And are not these things better proof of his divine nature than a mere name can be? Why moreover, should such an invidious distinction be implied to the prejudice of John, and of the Epistles? Do you not admit all the New Testament to be of divine origin and authority? Of what importance then is it whether the doctrine of Christ's divinity is found in one part or another? Besides, if any disciple could know who the Lord in reality was, has any one a better claim to be considered as knowing it than John, the disciple "who leaned on Jesus' bosom?"

You have passed the whole of John i. 1, with simply commenting on the *name*. My dear Sir, can you expect to satisfy candid inquirers with this? Are you not bound to tell us how this *Logos* (*Word*) did *create the worlds*, (*τα παντα* the universe,) before this text is disposed of? You must tell us how *creative power*, (the highest, the distinguishing act of Deity, which makes the characteristic and prominent feature of the true God in distinction from all other gods, Is. xl. 40, and onward,) can be *delegated*? When you can explain this, then you will bring us upon ground, where we shall be unable to controvert the Gnostics, who denied that the Jehovah of the Old Testament is the Supreme God. *Inferior* power, they maintained, was competent to create the world. What else do they, who ascribe creation to Christ and yet reject his Divinity?

Why should you pass over all that, on which we rely for proof, and touch only on that which we do not profess to place confident and certain reliance? I mean, why should you descant on the *name God*, and say nothing of the attributes ascribed to him who bears this name? If we should argue in the same manner with you, ought we to expect to convince you? Much less, could we acquit our consciences, of our obligation to represent fairly the gospel of Christ to the world, should we publish to them a solemn appeal, in which we should endeavour to lead them to believe, that *all* the argument in favour of a particular doctrine held by many Christians, consisted in that very thing *on which they did not rely*; or at most, which constituted but a part merely of their argument.

The simile from Plato and Socrates, I must think, is less happily chosen, than your fine taste and cultivated mind commonly lead you to choose. In the same breath that you say "Plato was in the begin-

ning with Socrates, and was Socrates;" you add, "that whoever saw and heard Plato, saw and heard, not Plato, but Socrates, and that as long as Plato lived, Socrates lived and taught." That is, your first sentence would be understood, of course, in a sense totally different from that which you meant to convey, unless you added the commentary along with the sentence. John has indeed added a commentary; but this is, *that he means to call Christ THE GOD who created the Universe*. Of this commentary you have taken no notice. Of this however you are bound to take notice, if you mean to convince those who differ from you; or to deal uprightly with those whom you design to instruct.

On the texts John xx. 28; Acts xx. 28; Rom. ix. 5; 1 Tim. iii. 16; Heb. i. 6; and John v. 20, I have already said what I wish to say, at present. The remarks in your Notes, do not seem to call for any new investigation.

You say, (near the close of your Note,) that you have "collected all the passages in the New Testament in which Jesus is *supposed* to be called God." The foregoing letter however, does represent us as *supposing* that there are *still more* in which he is called God; although I have omitted many, in which a multitude of Trinitarians have *supposed* that Christ is called God. Why you should affirm this, when nearly every book on the doctrine of the Trinity that ever has been published by Trinitarians will contradict it, I am unable to explain.

You repeat also the assertion here, "that in two or three passages, the title (of God) may be given him, (Christ); but in every case, it is given in connexions and under circumstances, which imply that it is not to be received in its highest and most literal sense."

But in no single instance, have you noticed the "connexions and circumstances," in which the appellation *God* is bestowed on Christ. Can you reasonably expect your thinking readers, will take this assertion upon credit? Are you not sacredly obligated to prove to these same readers, *by the Scriptures interpreted according to the universal laws of explaining human language*, that the New Testament writers have not ascribed to Christ CREATIVE power, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, divine worship, divine honours, and eternal existence? What are names in this dispute? Show that these attributes are not ascribed to Christ, and you make us Unitarians at once. Do not take advantage of representing our arguments as consisting in that on which we do not place our reliance; and then tell your readers,

‘This is all which Trinitarians have to say for themselves.’ Dispute can never be terminated in this way. Meet fairly and openly the points in debate. Many of your readers are too intelligent to be satisfied with any other course. Any other does not become your high character and exalted talents.



LETTER IV.

Reverend and Dear Sir,

IN my last Letter, I endeavored to offer reasons why I believe that Christ is truly divine. You will very naturally expect me to take some notice of those texts, on which you would specially rely, to prove his inferiority to the Father. This I must do; but in as summary a manner as possible. Not because it would not be easy to say much; even more easy than to write briefly, and yet with perspicuity; but because there would be danger of protracting the subject, and tiring the patience of both writer and reader.

Let me begin then, by stating certain things which are intimately connected with the subject in question. While I believe that Christ is truly divine, I believe that he is as truly human; that he was a real man, and lived, acted, suffered and died as a man. He resembled however man in his primitive state, i. e. Adam, as he came out of the hands of his Maker. He was pure and sinless. But he possessed all the feelings and all the innocent infirmities of human nature. I know no proposition that can possibly be proved from the New Testament, if this cannot; nor do I know of a more absurd heresy than that of the Docetæ, who averred that Christ was a man in appearance merely, and not in reality.

I had actually added to this last sentence the following one, "In this, I know, you are perfectly accordant with me;" but hesitating for a moment whether it was correct, I instituted a reexamination of your Sermon to see if this were the case. I can scarcely express my surprise, when after a diligent search, I was not able to find an intimation that Christ was truly and properly a man. All that you maintain is, that he was a being distinct from the Father and inferior to him. I must retract therefore my sentence against the Docetæ, lest I should seem to have treated your opinion with severity. But the state of my mind in regard to the weight of evidence, I cannot retract. If the evidence be not overwhelming, that Christ was perfectly man; I cannot conceive it possible, that any point in theology or morals is capable of being established.

The *Gnostics* maintained that from the supreme Divinity proceeded certain Eons, who were a kind of *dii minores*; and one of which (Christ) created the world. This Eon descended upon Jesus at his baptism, and forsook him at his crucifixion. In what important respect he differs from this, who holds to a superangelic soul, and a human body, (as it must be presumed you do,) I confess I cannot see. The Socinian seems to me incomparably more rational, and more tenable, than any shade of the Arian hypothesis. If the evidence be not complete, that Christ was really a man, from his birth, actions, sufferings, death, and affirmations respecting himself; then I cannot see how it is to be proved that Christ ever existed at all. And will you refuse your assent to the proposition, that Christ participated in the divine nature, because you cannot see *how* such a union of different natures could take place; and yet believe in a *human body*

united to a soul not human? To what order or class of beings, then, does this new *compound*, and strangely mixed person belong? He is not divine; he is not human, (for a human soul is surely essential to human nature;) he is not angelic; for angels have no corporeal forms. Are we to be freed from *mystery* by such a theory? I cannot adopt it, until I find it in the Scripture. But there I find that the *Logos*, who existed before the world was made, was *God*; and was the *Creator* of the universe. I cannot admit him to be a superangelic being simply, until I am convinced that my views of such passages as ascribe divinity to him, are incorrect.

As to the theory which maintains that Christ was God's own proper Son, before the creation of the world, (of course before his incarnation;) and God's own Son in the same sense in which Solomon was the son of David: It is natural to ask first, Who then was his *Mother*? And secondly; How much do the Divinities of the Christian system, differ from Jupiter and his progeny among the Greeks and Romans?

After all, I cannot but hope that I have not understood you correctly, and have not sufficient grounds to believe that you embrace any species of Arianism; least of all that you deny the proper humanity of Christ. For if *this* be not a fact; I must forever abandon the hope of acquiring the meaning, which the writers of the New Testament design to convey, in any case whatever.

To return to my purpose. The proper humanity of Christ being considered as an established fact; I have one general observation to make on the principles of exegesis, which are connected with it.

It is this; that in so far as Christ is human, every thing said of him in this capacity, must necessarily be

spoken of him as inferior to the Father. In a word; as his human nature is inferior to the divine, so whatever has relation to it, or is predicated of it, must of course be that which implies inferiority to the divine.

We do then, (if you will allow me to use your own expressive words, though applied by you in a connexion somewhat different,) “we do maintain, that the human properties and circumstances of Christ, his birth sufferings and death,—his praying to God, his ascribing to God all his power and offices; the acknowledged properties of Christ, we say, oblige us to interpret” them of *human nature*; and to draw the conclusion, that whatever could be predicated of a real man, pious and sinless, might be predicated of him. How would he—how *could* he—have assumed our nature, (except as the Docetæ affirmed he did, viz. in appearance only,) unless every thing could be predicated of him, which could be predicated of a man? Accordingly, we know that he increased in wisdom, stature, and favour with God and man; that he ate, drank, slept, laboured; was fatigued, hungry, thirsty; rejoiced and sympathized with his brethren, wept, was in an agony—prayed, bled, died, was buried, and rose again. If these things do not forever exclude all hope of making any shade of the Arian theory probable, I must confess that I am yet entirely in the dark, as to the nature of evidence, and what the New Testament does contain.

Do you ask me, how you shall distinguish, when a text speaks of Christ as human or as divine? I answer; just as when you speak of a man, you discern whether what is said relates to his body or his soul. When I say, Abraham is dead; I mean, obviously, his *mortal* part. When I say, Abraham is alive; I mean, obviously, his *immortal* part. When the Evangelist says, that Jesus

increased in stature, and wisdom, and in favour with God and man ; that he ate, drank, slept, prayed, suffered, died and rose again ; he obviously means, his human nature did this. When he affirms, that the *Logos* is God and made the Universe ; and the apostle says, that he is “supreme God, blessed forever,” I cannot help thinking it to be equally obvious that they mean his divine nature. The simple answer to your question then, is, that we must distinguish which nature is described, by what is affirmed concerning it. *Ex praedicatis subjectum discernitur.*

I must make one remark more, in this place. It is, that the appellation *Father* is not always applied to designate that distinction in the Godhead, which we commonly describe by calling it the first person ; but that it is sometimes a general title of the Divine Nature. (See Matt. i. 6.—Deut. xxxii. 6.—Isaiah lxiii. 16.—lxiv. 8.—Matt. v. 16, 48.—vi. 4.—vii. 11.—John viii. 41.—) In the same manner *Κυριος*, (Lord) is applied often to Christ in particular ; and to God as a general appellation. The Divinity is called *Father*, on account of his peculiar and provident care, which he extends to all the creatures of his power. He is called *Lord*, (*Κυριος*,) because of his universal dominion.

Christ then in his mediatorial capacity, or as to his human nature, by his obedience merited and obtained high reward. This reward I take to be the exaltation which God bestows upon him (Phil. ii. 9—11.) In this capacity, all power is *given* him in heaven, and in earth ; i.e. he is constituted “head over all things to his Church.” (Matt. xxviii. 18.) In this capacity ; “All enemies are put under his feet ;” (1. Cor. xv. 25—27.) And this mediatorial dominion, when the work of a mediator is completed, will be resigned, at the final judgment. (1. Cor. xv. 28.)

Of the same tenor are many passages. When God is said to be the head of Christ, (1 Cor. xi. 3;) I understand it of that nature, of which this can be predicated. When Christ is called the image of the invisible God, the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image (*χαρακτὴρ*) of his person, (i. e. of him;) or the only begotten of the Father, the Son of God; God's own Son; God's beloved Son; his dear Son, &c.; I understand all these as descriptions of his mediatorial nature, and station. I know indeed, that many of these texts have been appropriated by some Trinitarians, to prove the divine nature of Christ; in my apprehension however, injudiciously, and without any solid reason. Texts of this class may found, Mat. xvii. 5.—John i. 14.—x. 36.—xiv. 10.—iii. 35.—Col. i. 13.—Heb. i. 5—Rom. viii. 29, 32.

In Heb. v. 7—10, is a passage which has occasioned much speculation, but which seems to me evidently spoken of the human nature, in the mediatorial capacity.

It is certainly more difficult to satisfy the mind in regard to John xiv. 28; “my Father is greater (*μεῖζων*) than I.” On examination however, it appears not to be the object of Jesus to compare his own *nature* with that of the Father; but his *condition*. “If ye loved me,” said he to his weeping disciples, “Ye would rejoice that I said, I go unto the Father; for the Father is greater than I;” i. e. ye would rejoice that I am to leave this state of suffering and humiliation, and resume that “glory which I had with the Father, before the world was.” You ought to rejoice at my exaltation to the bliss and glory of the Father. So גָּדוֹל (great) in Hebrew, is used for a state of prosperity, a happy state. Gen. xxvi. 13,

Mark. xiii. 32 offers serious difficulties. “Of that day and that hour knoweth no man; no, not the angels, which

are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." The *day* and *hour* are, according to some, the day of judgment; but, as I apprehend, (from comparing the context,) the day of vengeance upon the Jews is meant. To solve the difficulty presented, some have objected to the reading, οὐδε ὁ υἱος, (neither the Son;) but for this objection there are no adequate authorities. Others, with Hilary (de Trinitate ix.) say, that *not to know*, is *not to publish* or *declare*. "Ea nescit, quae aut in tempore non sunt confitenda aut non agnoscuntur ad meritum." There is no doubt that the verb γινωσκω sometimes has the sense of *making known*; but a derivative of the verb εἶδω is used here, which does not bear such a sense; nor will the tenor of the verse admit it. Does the Father *make known* the day and hour? For if neither the Son nor the angels make it known, the implication would be that the Father did make it known. After all, what more real difficulty presents itself in this case, than in that where Jesus is said to have increased in wisdom? Luke ii. 52. If he did possess a nature really human, that nature was capable, of course, of progressive improvement and knowledge.

John xvii. 3. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." The true God here seems to me plainly not to be opposed to, or contrasted with Christ; but as every where else, in case this expression is used, *opposed to idols*. In the verse preceding, Christ says, "Thou hast given me power over ALL *flesh*, that thou mightest bestow eternal life upon ALL whom thou hast given me," i. e. both Gentiles and Jews. He proceeds; "This is eternal life, that they might know thee the only true God, (*the only God and true God*, the Greek is

capable of being rendered, as to sense,) and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Now what is there here, different from that which we preach and inculcate every Sabbath? Do we not teach that there is one only, living and true God? And that he sent his Son to die for sinners? And do we not insist, that eternal life is connected with the reception of these truths? I really see no more difficulty here, than in the text, "God so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

1 Cor. viii. 4—6. "As concerning, therefore, the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other god but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things and we by him." I have cited several verses for the sake of introducing the context. From this it is plain, that the one God, the Father, here, is not placed in opposition to Christ, but to the *lords many and gods many* of the heathen. If you insist that the *one God* is in opposition to *Christ*, or excludes him; then, for the same reason, as Christ is the *one Lord* (εἰς κυριος) you must insist that it is in opposition to the *Lordship* (κυριοτης) of the Father; and of course denies the *Lordship* of Creation to him. It is plain however, according to my apprehension, that *God* and *Lord* here are mere synonyms. (See verse 5th, where λεγομενοι Θεοι is explained by Θεοι πολλοι and κυριοι πολλοι.) Nothing is plainer than that κυριος is a common title of God, in the Old Testament and the New.

Moreover, what is predicated of the *one God* and *one Lord*, here is the same; viz. they are the author and preserver of all things. The use of the preposition *δια*, in cases of this nature has already been the subject of remark.

The nature of the whole case shews, that the apostle places the object of the Christian's worship in opposition to the heathen or idol gods. What then is that object? The one God the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ; who are the authors of all things, and all things are for them. The passage evidently holds out Christ to be in the same manner the object of the Christian's worship, as the Father is. And as the apostle seems to me simply to assert the unity of God, in opposition to idols, I am not able to perceive how the divinity of the Saviour is impeached by it, any more than the Lordship of the Father is impeached, by making Christ the *one Lord*. To embrace my view of the whole passage in a brief paraphrase; 'Idols are nothing; there is but one God. There are indeed among the heathen such as are *called gods* (*λεγομενοι Θεοι*,) who comprise *gods* and *lords* many; yet Christians have only one object of worship—one God and Lord.'

John x. 35, 36. "If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" Christ had previously said, "I and my Father are one." At this the Jews took up stones to stone him, "because being a man, he made himself God." It is perfectly clear, that the Jews frequently understood, or pretended to understand, his affirmations respecting himself, to amount to assertions that he was truly divine. In this case however, it is said that

Jesus repelled such an interpretation of his words, by an explanation which shows that he would apply to himself the word *God* only in an inferior sense.

I am not satisfied, that the passage requires this exegesis. The reply of Jesus is evidently *argumentum ad hominem*. "If the Old Testament, (the divine authority of which you admit,) calls them *gods*, to whom the word of God was addressed, (Ps. lxxxii. 6,) i. e. the magistrates of the Jews; how much more proper is it, that I, whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, should call myself the *Son of God*." If you are not offended, when your Scriptures bestow the title of *Elohim* upon civil magistrates merely; much less is there reason to be angry, when I, whom God hath distinguished from all others, made preeminent above them, and sent into the world on the designs of mercy, should call myself the *Son of God*. Verse 37; If I prove not the truth of these assertions by miracles; then disbelieve them. Verse 38; But if I do, believe the proof that may be drawn from my miracles, *that the Father is in me and I in him*. Now wherein did Jesus abate at all from any thing which he had before said? This latter expression, I do not indeed understand, (though some have done it,) as asserting his divine nature in a direct manner. It is a formula which is used to express the idea, that any one is *conjunctissimus Deo*; most nearly and affectionately connected with God. (See 1 John iv. 16, where it is applied to Christians; also verses 12 and 13.)

In the whole passage, it appears plain to me, that Jesus has not asserted any thing, which could not be predicated of his incarnate or human nature as sustaining the office of Messiah. He had called God *his Father*; and, as the Jews supposed, in a peculiar and appropri-

ate sense. But it did not follow, that by this term he meant to assert his divine nature. Rather the contrary appears. "Say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world," i. e. the Son of God, &c. Jesus then does not undertake to answer the question, whether he is truly divine; but simply to vindicate the language which he had used, against the accusations of the Jews. "If your magistrates are called *Elohim*, is it presumption in me to call myself the Son of God?" This leaves the question unagitated as to his divine nature; but vindicates the language which he had used, against the malignant aspersions of the Jews, by an argument from their own Scriptures.

It shows indeed, that the term "Son of God," does not *appropriately* designate Christ as divine, but as the incarnate Mediator;—as him *whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world*. Did the Father *sanctify* and *send into the world* his *Son* as GOD, who is infinitely perfect and immutable? As Mediator, as Messiah, Christ was sent into the world; as *Son* he filled, and acted in, a subordinate capacity; how then can his being *Son* prove him to be divine? *Son of God* indeed, by usage, has become a kind of *proper name*; and in this view, designates occasionally a distinction in the Godhead, which I believe to be eternal. But this is only an occasional and *secondary* use of it. Commonly and *appropriately*, it designates the incarnate Messiah, as born in a manner supernatural, (Luke i. 35, comp. iii. 38;) as the special object of divine love, (Mat. xvii. 5.—Col. i. 13.—John iii. 35;) and as exhibiting the best and highest resemblance of the Father, (Col. i. 15.—Heb. i. 3.—John i. 14.—x. 38.—xiv. 10.) Would theologians keep these ideas in view, I cannot help thinking they might be able to un-

derstand each other better, and to reason more conclusively.

I have thus summarily touched upon the principal texts, which are employed by Unitarians, to oppose the doctrines which I have been endeavoring to defend. Whether I have violated the laws of exegesis in doing this; and whether you or I depart most from them, in explaining the texts which seem to be at variance with the opinions that we defend, must be the subject of another letter.

I must observe however, before I close this letter, which contains all that I have at present to advance, in regard to the particular doctrines that your Sermon exhibits, that I do not omit making observations on the rest of the Sermon, because I accede either to many things which you profess to believe, or to the mode in which you have represented the sentiments of Trinitarians. The manner in which you accuse us of treating the moral attributes of God; your appropriating to yourself and your party the exclusive belief in all that is amiable and excellent in the Deity, (pp. 15—18;) your assertion that the reproaches which you are obliged to encounter are occasioned chiefly by your zeal to vindicate the dishonored goodness and rectitude of God, (p. 18;) the manner in which you state our views of the atonement, and appropriate to your party only many important things in which we all agree, (pp. 18—21;) the appropriation also to Unitarians only, of many views respecting the love of God, rational zeal in religion, and the benevolent virtues; and the intimations that we are in opposition to all that is excellent, and rational, and worthy of belief; I must be permitted to say, do not seem to me well adapted to conciliate, nor very consistent with your declaration, (p. 24,)

when you say, "Charity, forbearance, a delight in the virtues of different sects; a backwardness to censure and condemn are virtues which we admire and recommend." But, my dear Sir, I will not trust myself one moment on this ground. I am sure, that a sober review of your discourse, in prospect of your accountability to God, for the manner in which you have represented and treated so large a portion of the Christian community in this country, (some of whom, at least, are accustomed to think and reason for themselves, though they cannot agree with you;) a review after the heat of the occasion is past, that prompted such representations, and induced you to place us in attitude so debasing and repulsive; will give you more acute sensations than any thing which I can say would inspire, or that I could even wish. I do not know but I may betray similar excitement in my remarks. But if I have attempted to hold you, or Unitarians up to ridicule; if I have misrepresented your sentiments; if I have charged you with treating Jehovah as the heathens did Jupiter, or endeavoured to frame my arguments so as to captivate and lead away the unwary and unthinking; or made one single effort to use the *argumentum ad invidiam*; or appealed to human authorities to decide the question between us; appealed to any thing but the sober rules of exegesis; then I desire to know it, and be humbled for it. I will not say that I have not transgressed in any of these particulars; for who that knows the human heart does not know that it is deceitful? But I can say sincerely, I did not mean to transgress; and that I will, with all my heart, thank the man, who in the spirit of Christian love will point out my error, and show me wherein I have written in such a way as to endanger or render repulsive the cause

which I am advocating. That cause I believe to be just ; and I should regret to employ any devices, management, or stratagem, or any unfairness to defend it. What other real interest have we but to know the truth ? And what but simple argument can lead us to it ?

I retire then, for the present, from all the field of review which the remainder of your Sermon presents ; hoping that this remainder may fall into abler and better hands than mine ; that it may be thoroughly sifted by some one, who has more health, and more leisure than I enjoy ; and who will rest his whole defence on the simple basis of the word of God, interpreted by the laws which reason prescribes. Should not this be the case ; I may hereafter resume and continue these remarks, so as to comprise all the topics which your Sermon presents.



LETTER V.

Reverend and Dear Sir,

IN p. 14 of your Sermon, you inform us of the method in which you explain those passages which seem to speak of the divine nature of Christ. The paragraph is as follows :

“ I am aware, that these remarks will be met by two or three texts, in which Christ is called God, and by a class of passages, not very numerous, in which divine properties are said to be ascribed to him. To these we offer one plain answer. We say, that it is one of the most established and obvious principles of criticism, that language is to be explained according to the known properties of the subject to which it is applied. Every man knows, that the same words convey very different ideas, when used in relation to different beings. Thus, Solomon *built* the temple in a different manner from the architect whom he employed : and God *repents* differently from man. Now, we maintain, that the known properties and circumstances of Christ, his birth, sufferings, and death, his constant habit of speaking of God

as a distinct being from himself, his praying to God, his ascribing to God all his power and offices, these acknowledged properties of Christ, we say, oblige us to interpret the comparatively few passages, which are thought to make him the supreme God, in a manner consistent with his distinct and inferior nature. It is our duty to explain such texts, by the rule which we apply to other texts, in which human beings are called gods, and are said to be partakers of the divine nature, to know and possess all things, and to be filled with all God's fulness. These latter passages we do not hesitate to modify, and restrain, and turn from the most obvious sense, because this sense is opposed to the known properties of the beings to whom they relate; and we maintain, that we adhere to the same principle, and use no greater latitude, in explaining, as we do, the passages which are thought to support the Godhead of Christ."

I must *hesitate* however to adopt this principle, without examining its nature and tendency. On the supposition that you admit the Bible to be a revelation from God, as you aver, permit me to ask whether it is the object of a revelation to disclose truths which *are not known*, or are insufficiently established; or whether it is the object of a revelation to disclose truths *already known* and established? If you answer, The latter; then your answer denies, of course, that it is a *Revelation*. What the book of nature exhibits, the Scriptures do not *reveal*. Is there then, any thing in the Scriptures, which the book of nature does not exhibit? If you concede this; then I ask, in regard to that *unknown thing* which is *revealed*, How are we to obtain any notion respecting it? E. g. the resurrection of the body is revealed. Now it is a *known* property of the human body to corrupt and perish. Shall I construe a passage of Scripture then in such a manner as to contradict this known property? If not, then I can never suppose the resurrection of the body to be revealed. I however do construe it differently—following the obvious assertion of the sacred writers, and not allowing myself to force a constructive meaning upon their language. Yet, if I un-

derstand you, I am at liberty, “to restrain, and modify, and turn the words from their most obvious sense,” because this sense is opposed to the known properties of the matter of which our bodies are composed.

The case is just the same, in regard to any other fact or doctrine. What I know already of a thing is, if you are correct, to “modify, restrain, and turn from their obvious sense,” the words which are employed in revealing them, because what is revealed I suppose to be at variance with some known doctrines or properties. Is there not room here, for great caution, and great doubt, as to the correctness of your principle?

According to this principle, moreover, the Scriptures are to be construed very differently, by persons of different degrees of knowledge. One man knows the properties of things far more extensively than his neighbor. He sees that what is revealed may consist with these *known properties*; but his neighbor, who lacks this knowledge, is unable to perceive the consistency of revelation with what he knows; either because his knowledge does not qualify him to judge, or because what he thinks he knows, he is really ignorant of. The same text in the Bible therefore, may be received by one, and rejected by the other, as a part of Revelation. The measure of a man’s knowledge consequently, cannot be a proper rule, by which we may test the meaning of Scripture.

But you will say, “I can never believe in the reality of a revelation, which contradicts my reason.” I accede; on the supposition that reason is understood in a proper sense. And here is the very place where I find the greatest difficulty with your theory of interpretation. You do not carry your objections back to the proper place. If *God manifest in the flesh* be an absurdity, a

palpable contradiction—"an enormous tax upon human credulity," as you aver; then the claims of the book which asserts this, are, no doubt, to be disregarded. What is palpable contradiction, we certainly can never believe.

But in determining what the Scriptures have taught, we have no right to say, that because this or that doctrine is repugnant to our views, therefore we will "modify and restrain, and turn from the obvious sense," the words in which it is conveyed. The rules of exegesis are not a mass of wax, which can be moulded, at pleasure, into any shape which we may fancy. We do as great violence to reason—to the first principles of all reasoning, when we violate them, as when we admit absurdities to be true.

In case an obscure term is used, I acknowledge that clear passages relating to the same subject, are to be adduced to ascertain its meaning. If Christ had been simply called *God*; I should allow, that this term *might* be explained by its use as applied to inferior beings. But when the sacred writers themselves have explained the meaning which they attach to it, by telling us that he is the God who created and governs the world; who is omniscient and eternal; the object of religious worship and prayer; God over all, or supreme God; (not to mention "the true God," and the "great God;") there is no law of exegesis, no method of interpretation which can fritter away the meaning, that is not absolute violence—an infringement of the fundamental principles of all interpretation, an abandonment of the first principles of our reason. It does appear to me therefore, that my only resort in such a case is, to reject their authority, if I disbelieve the doctrine. To say that they did not mean to teach, what

they most obviously have taught, I *cannot* ; *must* not. No book can be understood ; no writer can be interpreted at all, by such a rule of exegesis, without forcing upon him the opinions of his readers. My system of philosophy, we will say, differs from yours. What you view to be a palpable contradiction and absurdity, I view as rational and consistent. This, we know, is not an uncommon fact. In reading a writer then, that respects the subject of our differing opinions, you hold yourself bound to construe him so as to save all that appears to you contradictory, and absurd ; and I interpret him, just as his language obviously means, by the common laws of exegesis, which do not depend on philosophy. This writer then, has two different meanings, according to us, in the same passage. Is this so ? *Can it be ?* Or rather are not the laws of interpretation independent of you or me ? If not, how can the meaning of any writer be ever obtained ?

You and I differ, as to what John has taught in the first chapter of his gospel. I commence reading him, with the full conviction that I cannot determine *a priori*, in all respects, what the nature of God and Christ is ; and with the belief that John wrote what is a revelation from heaven. I read John, and interpret him just as I do any other author, ancient or modern, by the general rules of interpretation modified by the special circumstances and dialect in which he wrote. I am as well satisfied, that he meant to assert the truly divine nature of the *Logos*, as I am that he has made any assertion at all. I receive this assertion therefore, as declaring a fact, which I ought to believe ; and which, if I admit his inspiration, I must believe. In the same manner, I treat all other passages which respect this subject. I come in this way to the conclusion that Christ is truly divine ; that he has

a human and divine nature so united, (I undertake not to tell in what manner,) that he speaks of either nature as himself. The passages which seem to imply his inferiority, I find to be capable of explanation without contradiction, or doing violence to the language, by the obvious fact that he has two natures united, which the sacred writers seem to me so plainly to inculcate. In this way, I find one consistent whole. I save the laws of exegesis. I admit, indeed, on the authority of revelation, doctrines which natural religion never taught; but *why should not a revelation teach something which natural religion did not?*

Here then I take my stand. *I abide by the simple declarations of the New Testament writers, interpreted by the common laws of language.* My views reconcile all the seeming variations of description, in regard to Christ, without doing violence to any. I can believe and do believe, that the sacred writers are consistent, without any explanation but such as the laws of interpretation admit and require.

On the other hand; when you read the first of John, you say, The known properties of Christ must modify the description. How then are those properties *known*? By the same writer; the same authority; the same revelation. But what can give to one part of John's book any more credit than to the other part? You will say, you can understand better how Christ can be inferior to God, than how he can be divine. Granting this might be the case—is a revelation merely to teach us things which are obvious; or may it not disclose those which are more difficult, and cannot be discovered by unassisted reason? If the latter; how can you aver, that Christ may not be revealed as a divine person? To show *a*

priori that this is impossible, or absurd, is really out of the question. The religion of nature teaches nothing for or against this fact. The simple question then is, What has John said? not what your philosophy may lead you to regard as probable or improbable. And I must be allowed to say again, If John has not asserted Christ to be truly divine, I am utterly unable by the laws of exegesis, to make out that he has asserted any thing in his whole gospel.

If I believed then, as you do, that a Saviour with a human and divine nature, is "an enormous tax, on human credulity," I should certainly reject the authority of John. To violate the laws of exegesis in order to save his credit, I could regard as nothing more than striving to keep up a fictitious belief in divine revelation. It is what I cannot do; and what no man ought to do. It would be impossible for me, with your views, to hesitate at all about giving up entirely the old idea of the divine inspiration and authority of the sacred books. How can they be divine, if they teach palpable absurdities? And that they do teach what you call palpable absurdities, I feel quite satisfied can be amply proved from the simple application of the laws of interpretation, that are established on an immoveable basis.

You have however, undertaken to vindicate your method of construing the Scriptures, by intimating the necessity of interpreting several unlimited assertions in respect to *Christians*, in the same way as you do many in respect to Christ. "Recollect," you say, "the unqualified manner in which it is said of Christians, that they possess all things, know all things, and do all things" And again, in order to show how we may "modify and restrain and turn from the obvious sense." the passages that res-

pect the divinity of Christ; you say, "It is our duty to explain such texts, by the rule which we apply to other texts, in which human beings are called gods, and are said to be partakers of the divine nature, to know and possess all things, and to be filled with all God's fulness."

I have already examined sufficiently the manner in which the Bible calls men *gods*. There is and can be no mistake here; for instead of attributing to them divine attributes, it always accompanies the appellations with such adjuncts as guard against mistake. It does not call them *God*; and then add, that the *God* is meant, who is the Creator of the Universe.

Nor does the New Testament, (your *sole* Statute book,) any where call *men God*. Will you produce the instance; unless it be in the case of Christ, which is the case in question? But that the appellation here is bestowed under circumstances totally diverse from those, in which it is applied to men in the Old Testament, is a fact too obvious to need further explanation. The Hebrew word אֱלֹהִים (*Elohim*) had plainly a latitude more extensive, i. e. it was capable of a greater variety of use, than the Greek word Θεός. Can you produce from the Greek Scriptures, i. e. the New Testament, an instance where Θεός is applied to any *man* whatever?

In regard to the assertion, "that Christians are made partakers of the divine nature;" (2 Pet. i. 4,) a mistake about the meaning is scarcely possible. "Whereby (i. e. by the gospel,) are given unto us," says the apostle, "exceeding great and precious promises, that BY THESE ye might be *partakers of the divine nature*." But how? He answers this question. "Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." That is, by moral purification you will become assimilated to God, or par-

takers of that holy nature, which he possesses. Does the context here afford any ground for mistake ?

In 1 John ii. 20, Christians are said to have “an unction from the Holy one, and to *know all things*.” In the preceding verse, the apostle had been describing apostates, who forsook the Christian cause, because they were not sincerely attached to it. The case of real Christians, who have an unction from the Holy One is different. They “*know all things*.” And what means this ? The sequel explains it. “I have not written unto you,” says he, “because *ye know not the truth* ; but because *ye know it*, and that no lie is of the truth.” To “*know all things*” then, plainly means here, to know all that pertains to Christian doctrine and duty, so as to persevere, and not to apostatise from the truth as others had done.

Is this however asserting, as you affirm in your Sermon, that Christians are said in “an *unqualified manner* to know all things ?”

In John xiv. 26, the Holy Ghost is promised to the apostles “to *teach them all things*, and to bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever Christ had said unto them.” Again, John xvi. 23, the “Spirit of truth is promised to guide the disciples *into all truth* ;” and in 1 John ii. 27, the anointing which Christians have received, is said to “teach them all things.” In all these cases, the context leaves no room to doubt, that “all things essential to Christian doctrine and practice” is meant. No person, I presume, ever understood these passages as meaning that the apostles or Christians should be endowed with omniscience.

Yet in the other case, where Christ is asserted to be *God*, the context is such, that the great body of Chris-

tians in every age have understood the sacred writers as asserting that he was truly divine. Is there no difference between the two cases? You make them indeed the same, in respect to the principle of interpretation. To my mind the difference lies in this; that in the one case the adjuncts *prevent* you from ascribing omniscience to Christians; in the other they *lead you necessarily to do so*, unless you “turn their meaning from the obvious sense” so far, as to transgress the fundamental maxims of interpreting language.

In 1 Cor. iii. 22, the apostle says to the Corinthian churches, “All things are yours;” and the same apostle speaks of himself, (2 Cor. vi. 10) as “having nothing and yet *possessing all things*.” In the first case, the context adds, “Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come—all are yours; and ye are Christ’s;” i. e. simply, (when the phraseology is construed as elsewhere,) let no man glory in this or that particular teacher; all teachers belong to the Church, and all things in the present and future world will minister to the good of the church; why should you covet exclusive, individual possessions, when you have an interest in the whole? Refrain therefore, from the spirit of jealousy and contention.

The second case is merely antithesis. The apostle evidently asserts, (compare the context,) that although he has little indeed of this world’s good, yet he possesses a far more excellent and satisfactory good, in comparison of which all else is nothing. In the same sense, we every day speak of a man’s *all*; meaning that which he most desires and loves best.

I can no more see here, than in the other instances

already discussed, why you should affirm, that Christians are said “in an *unqualified* manner to possess all things.”

One expression still remains. In Eph. iii. 19, the apostle exhibits his fervent wishes, that the Christians at Ephesus might “be filled with all the fulness of God.” By comparing this expression, as applied to Christ in Col. i. 19.—ii. 9, with John i. 14, 16, and Eph. i. 23, it appears evident, that by the *fulness of God* is meant the abundant gifts and graces which were bestowed on Christ, and through him upon his disciples; John i. 16—Eph. i. 23. When Paul prays therefore, that the Church at Ephesus might be “filled with the fulness of God;” he prays simply, that they might be abundantly replenished with the gifts and graces, peculiar to the Christian religion. But how does such an affirmation concern the principle of exegesis in question?

I am well satisfied, that the course of reasoning in which you have embarked, and the principles by which you explain away the divinity of the Saviour must lead most men who approve them, eventually to the conclusion that the Bible is not of divine origin, and does not oblige us to belief or obedience. I do not aver, that they will certainly lead you there. The remains of your former education and belief, may still serve to guard you against the bolder conclusions of some of your brethren, who have not been placed under instruction such as you enjoyed, in early life. You have more serious views of the importance of religion, than many, perhaps most of those who speculate with you. Consistency too, will afford strong inducement not to give up the divine authority of the Scriptures. Yet many of your younger brethren have no inconsistency to fear, by adopting such views. Deeming what you have publicly taught them to be true.

viz., that it is “no crime to believe with Mr. Belsham,” who boldly and plainly declares, that the *Scriptures are not the word of God*; feeling the inconsistency, (as I am certain some of them will and do feel it,) of violating the fundamental rules of interpretation, in order to make the apostles speak as in their apprehension they ought to speak; and unable to reconcile what the apostles say, with their own views; they will throw off the restraints which the old ideas of the inspiration and infallibility of the Scriptures impose upon them, and receive them simply on the ground, on which they place any other writings of a moral and religious nature.

I make no pretensions to uncommon foresight, in regard to this subject. I certainly do not say these things with invidious designs, and for the sake of kindling the fire of contention. Very far from it. On the contrary; I believe that the parties now contending here will have no quiet, until this ground be openly taken, on your part. For myself, I view it as incomparably more desirable in every point of view, that the authority of the Scriptures should at once be cast off; and its claims to divine inspiration rejected; than that such rules of exegesis should be introduced, as make the Scripture speak, *nolens volens*, whatever any party may desire. Avowed unbelief in the divine authority of the Scriptures can never continue long, in the present day of light and examination. Such a state of things, may pass away with the generation who act in it. But it is a more difficult matter to purge away the stain, which Christianity may contract by violated laws of interpretation: because those who indulge in such a violation profess to respect the Christian religion, and to acknowledge its divine original.

In making these observations, on the nature and prob-

able consequences of your system of exegesis, which explains away the Deity of Christ; I cannot think that I am building castles in the air, to amuse my own imagination. For ten years past, I have been called, every week, to duties which necessitated me to be conversant with the history of exegesis, as it has appeared in Germany; a country which in half a century has produced more works on criticism and sacred literature, than the world contains besides. About fifty years since, Semler, Professor of Divinity at Halle, began to lecture and publish on the subject of interpretation, in a manner that excited the attention of the whole German Empire. The grand principle, by which he explained away whatever he did not think proper to believe, was that which has been called *accommodation*. He maintained, that the apostles and the Saviour often admitted representations and doctrines into their instructions, which were calculated merely for the purpose of persuading the Jews, being *accommodated* to their prejudices; but were not intended to be a general directory of sentiment. In this way, whatever was inconsistent with his own views, he called *accommodation*; and thus at once expunged it from the list of Christian doctrines.

Semler's original genius and great learning soon gave currency to his views in Germany, where a system of theology and exegesis had prevailed, which in not a few respects needed reformation. Since his time, a host of writers, (many of them with exalted talents and most extensive erudition,) have arisen, who have examined, explained, modified and defended the doctrine of *accommodation*. The more recent shape of it is, to solve all the miraculous facts related in the Bible, by considerations which are affirmed to be drawn from the idiom and

ignorance of antiquity in general, and in particular of the sacred writers themselves. Thus, with Eichhorn, the account of the creation and fall of man, is merely a poetical, philosophical speculation of some ingenious person, on the origin of the world and of evil. (*Urgeschichte*, passim.) So, in regard to the offering up of Isaac by Abraham; he says, "the Godhead could not have required of Abraham so horrible a crime; and there can be no justification, palliation, or excuse for this pretended command of the Divinity." He then explains it. Abraham dreamed that he must offer up Isaac, and according to the superstition of the times regarded it as a divine admonition. He prepared to execute the mandate, which his dream had conveyed to him. A lucky accident, (probably the rustling of a ram who was entangled in the bushes,) hindered it: and this according to ancient idiom, was also the voice of the divinity. (*Bibliothek. Band i. s. 45, &c.*)

The same writer represents the history of the Mosaic legislation at mount Sinai, in a curious manner. Moses ascended the top of Sinai, and built a fire there, (how he found wood on this barren rock, or raised it to the top, Eichhorn does not tell us,) a fire consecrated to the worship of God, before which he prayed. Here an unexpected and tremendous thunder storm occurred. He seized the occasion, to proclaim the laws which he had composed in his retirement, as the statutes of Jehovah; leading the people to believe that Jehovah had conversed with him. Not that he was a deceiver; but he really believed that the occurrence of such a thunder storm was a sufficient proof of the fact, that Jehovah had spoken to him, or sanctioned the work in which he had been engaged. (*Bibliothek. Band. i. Theil 1. s. 76, &c.*)

The prophecies of the Old Testament are, according to him, patriotic wishes, expressed with all the fire and elegance of poetry, for the future prosperity, and a future deliverer of the Jewish nation. (Propheten. Bibliothek. Einleit, passim.)

In like manner, C. F. Ammon, professor of theology at Erlangen, tells us, in respect to the miracle of Christ's walking on the water, that "to walk on the sea, is not to stand on the waves, as on the solid ground, as Jerom *dreams*, but to walk through the waves so far as the shoals reached, and then to swim." (Pref. to edit. of Ernesti Inst. Interpret. p. 12.) So in regard to the miracle of the loaves and fishes, (Mat. xiv. 15,) he says, that Jesus probably distributed some loaves and fishes which he had, to those who were around him, and thus excited by his example others among the multitude, who had provisions, to distribute them in like manner: (p. 16.)

Thiess, in his commentary on Acts, explains the miraculous effusion of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, (Acts ii.,) in the following manner: "It is not uncommon," says he, "in those countries, for a violent gust of wind to strike only a particular spot or house. Such a gust is commonly accompanied by the electric fluid; and the sparks of this are scattered all around. These float about the chamber, become apparent, and light upon the disciples. They kindle into enthusiasm at this; and believe the promise of their master is now to be performed. This enthusiasm spectators assemble to witness; and instead of preaching as before in Hebrew, each one uses his own native tongue to proclaim his feelings."

I have not followed the words through the whole, but have given the substance in the two last sentences.

Such was the outpouring of the Spirit ; and such the gift of tongues.

The same Thiess, (Com. on Chap. iii.) represents the miraculous cure of the man who was lame from his birth, by Peter, in a very singular way. " This man," says he, " was lame, only according to report. He never walked any ; so, the people believed that he could not walk. Peter and John, being more sagacious however, *threatened* him. ' In the name of the Messiah,' said they, ' Stand up.' The word *Messiah* had a magical power. He stood up. Now one saw that he could walk. To prevent the compassion of men from being turned into rage, (at his deceit,) he chose the most sagacious party, and connected himself with the apostles."

The case of Ananias falling down dead is thus represented by the same writer : " Ananias fell down terrified ; but probably he was carried out and buried, while still alive.

Heinrichs however, who produces this Comment of Thiess, relates another mode of explaining the occurrence in question ; which is, that *Peter stabbed Ananias* ; " which," says Heinrichs, " does not at all disagree with the vehement and easily exasperated temper of Peter." (Nov. Test. Koppianum, Vol. iii. Partic. ii. pp. 355—357, &c.

You may smile, my dear Sir, or shudder at these explanations ; but I am entirely unable to see how they imply a greater liberty, than you take with John i. 1., and Rom. ix. 5 ; with Heb. i. 8, 9, and many other passages.

Numerous systems of Hermeneutica, i. e. the Art of Interpretation, have been written and published in Germany, on this plan. Meyer, in a very laboured system of

Hermeneutica of the Old Testament, in two large octavos, has a body of rules, by which every thing miraculous is to be explained away. He concedes that there is the same objection to admitting any one miracle, as to admitting all. He therefore rejects the whole. So Bauer, in his *Hermeneutica*; and a multitude of others.

In the course of the discussions which these principles have excited in Germany, the question about Christ's divinity has been entirely forgotten. When the contest first began, this point was warmly contested. But the fundamental questions, whether the Scriptures are divinely inspired; and whether the doctrine of *accommodation* can be used, in all its latitude, in interpreting them, soon took the place of this. *Accommodation* has been sifted, attacked, defended, explained, moderated, modified, itself *accommodated*; so that at last it is nearly driven from the ground, and the plain and simple rules of exegesis are triumphant among the best part of the German critics.

In the mean time, they have not returned to the principles of their Lutheran Symbol. Very far from it. While they allow that John, and Peter, and Paul, did believe and teach the doctrine of Christ's divinity and of the atonement, they hold themselves under no obligation to receive them. De Wette, who has recently published a *System of Theology* and is Professor of the same at Jena, maintains, that the Pentateuch was composed about the time of the captivity; that the Jewish ritual was of gradual formation, accessions being made to it by superstition; that the book of Chronicles, (which is filled with scraps and inconsistencies,) was foisted into the canon by some of the priesthood, who wished to exalt their own order. His *Beitrag*e, which contained these

sentiments, was published before the death of Griesbach, and came out recommended by him; who says, 'If you object to the young literary adventurer, (De Wette,) that he has endeavored to bring Judaism into disrepute, my answer is, This is no more than Paul himself has laboured to do.' (Pref. to *Beitrage*.)

In his book *de morte expiatoria Christi*, (the atonement of Christ,) he represents Christ as disappointed that the Jews would not hearken to him as a moral teacher simply; which was the first character he assumed. Christ then assumed the character of a prophet, and asserted his divine mission, in order that the Jews might be induced to listen to him. Finding that they would not do this, and that they were determined to destroy him, in order not to lose the whole object of his mission, and to convert necessity into an occasion of giving himself credit, he gave out, that his death itself would be *expiatory*.

Yet De Wette holds a most exalted rank in Germany. I doubt whether Germany can boast of an oriental scholar, or a literary man, who has more admirers than De Wette. Gesenius of Halle, has spoken of him, in a letter recently received, in the highest terms; and selects and recommends him, among all the literati, critics and orientalists of Germany, as most deserving of special acquaintance and confidence.

Both of these gentlemen are *professors of Divinity* in German Universities; both men of great genius, and most profound erudition; men too who stand at the head of oriental literature in the German Empire; not to add in the whole world.

What shall we say now of De Wette? That he is not a Christian? Surely he would look with disdain on

any man, who should think of such an accusation; and tax that man with the highest degree of illiberality and superstition.

Will you say; "What is all this to us? We do not avow, or defend such opinions." True, I answer; at *present*, you do not avow them. A short time since *they* did not. But as soon as their numbers increased, so that they began to be fearless of consequences; and their antagonists urged the laws of exegesis upon them, they abandoned the ground of defending the divine authenticity of the Bible, at once. A few years since, the state of the question in Germany was very nearly what it now is here. At present, the most of the German critics, (rejecting *accommodation*, and casting off all ideas of the divine origin of the Scriptures,) are disputing with great zeal the questions, Whether a miracle be possible? Whether God and nature are one and the same thing? (Schelling, a *divine* too, being at the head of a great party which maintain that they are the same;) and Whether the Jews ever expected any Messiah? Some time ago, their critics maintained that no Messiah was predicted in the Old Testament; but now they question even whether the Jews had any such expectation. The fact whether Christ rose from the dead, long ago was disputed; and now it would seem, that they have come nearly to the end of questions on *theology*. At least I cannot well devise, what is to come next.

It needs now, only an acquaintance with German reasoners and critics, (a thing which is fast coming in,) to induce young men to go with them, who set out with your maxim, that "to believe with Mr. Belsham is no crime." No man can read these writers, without finding a great deal of excellent matter in them, well arranged, and of

real utility. I venture to add, no man can read them, and ever after take up Priestley, Belsham, Carpenter, Yates, Lindsey, or any other of the recent, English Unitarian writers, as *critics*, but with disgust. Cappe is the only one whom I have seen, that appears to have studied his Bible. He was evidently a man of thought, and a lover of Biblical study. But the incomparably greater acquisitions of the German critics in every department of study, spread a charm over their writings, for the lover of discussion and literature, that is not often found in productions of this nature. I must add, that much as I differ in sentiment from them, and fundamentally subversive of Christianity as I believe their views to be, I am under great obligations to them for the instructions they have given me; and specially for convincing me that we need nothing more than the simple rules of exegesis, and a candid, believing heart, to see in the Scriptures, with overpowering evidence, all the substantial and important doctrines, which have commonly been denominated *orthodox*.

Such has been the impression on me, from reading German writers. And with such impressions I can never regret the time that I have spent in studying them. Abler advocates than they for the fashionable philosophy, which is endeavouring to explain away the book of God, I do not expect to find.

Si Pergama dextrâ

Defendi pössent, etiam hâc defensa fuissent.

Able however as they are, my mind returns from the study of them with an impression more deep, radical and satisfactory than ever before, that the great doctrines of the gospel, commonly denominated *evangelical* or *orthodox*, are the doctrines of the Scriptures, and are the truth of

God. My views as to the interpretation of particular texts, in some cases, have been changed by the study of philology and interpretation. I should not rely for the proof of doctrines now on some texts which I once thought contained such proof. But my impressions of the real truth and importance of evangelical doctrines, I can truly say, are greatly strengthened.

Before you pronounce sentence upon the German Expositors, whom I have quoted above, I trust you will give them a hearing. I cannot think it possible that with the maxims in regard to reasoning about the Scriptures which you defend, you should not at last go full length with the most liberal of them all. The difference between their sentiments and yours is immeasurably less, than the difference between your sentiments now, and those which you avowed, when you first became a preacher of the gospel. A mind that is capable of reasoning and thinking in such a manner as yours, must necessarily, as it seems to me, come to the same conclusions with Eichhorn, and Paulus, and Henke, and other distinguished men of the new German School, when it begins with maxims of reasoning like those which you adopt.

You may be ready, perhaps, to express your surprise, that I should commend the study of such writers, as those whom I have quoted. I am well aware, indeed, that the serious mind revolts at the glaring impiety of such comments as those which I have produced. But after all, if a man were to judge and condemn these very writers, by a few selections of this nature, it would be hasty. On points which are not concerned with the special doctrines of Christianity; in illustrating the critical and literary history, the philology, natural history, and grammatical exegesis,—every thing literary or scien-

tificál that pertains to the Bible ; who can bear competition with recent German writers, both orthodox and heterodox? For it is a point that ought to be understood, though it seems as yet but little known among us, that Germany has recently produced some men of most extensive erudition and excellent talents, who have defended the common doctrines of the Reformation. I know indeed, that you are an advocate for unlimited research. For myself, I have long practised upon these principles. And I cannot but think the cautious fears of many of those, with whom I agree in sentiment, in respect to the limits of study, though honourable to the spirit of piety which they cherish, and indicative of real interest and concern for the prosperity of the church, are not well founded. The fundamental principle of Protestantism is, that the *Bible is the only rule of faith and practice*. To know what the Bible teaches then, is the great object of all religious knowledge. To understand this, (as to acquire every thing else,) study, and diligence are necessary. Men are not inspired now, as the apostles and primitive Christians were, to understand all truth. Men are imperfect, and have imperfect knowledge. No one sect, party, or body of men can claim absolute perfection of knowledge or virtue. And as a great many points of inquiry, (interesting and important ones too,) may be managed by men of sobriety, in the use of only their natural intellect, and their resources of learning; the man who loves the book of God, and desires the most extensive acquaintance with it which he can possibly make, will not neglect them, or any source of knowledge within his power. It was a noble maxim of a heathen, "*Fas est ab hoste doceri*;" we may receive instruction from an enemy. Christians too often forget this; and permit antipathy to par-

ticular sentiments to exclude them from all the profit, which might be derived from a more enlarged acquaintance with the writings of opponents. Believing as I do, that many, who are arrayed against the sentiments that I espouse, are not destitute of sense, or of learning, and are not to be despised ; I am inclined always to see how they vindicate their cause. If I am not convinced by *their* arguments, I am rendered better satisfied with *my own*, and more able to defend them by such an investigation. But if I could not practise upon the noble maxim, *Fas est ab hoste doceri* ; I would at least apply another one to vindicate the study of the German writers, and even (in proper cases) to recommend it. I would say, (as was said in a different connection and for a different object ;) *Egyptii sunt, spoliemus ; They are Egyptians, let us take their spoils.* Shall I not accept the good which they proffer me ; and proffer me in a more scientific manner, and well digested, lucid, established form, than I can elsewhere find ? Without hesitation, I answer Yes.

I do not fail to view the subject in another light. Every student in theology ; every Christian minister ought to be established in the truth, and able to “ *convince gainsayers.*” How can he do this, *if he does not know what these gainsayers allege ?* Is he to engage in war against the foes of truth, without knowing the weapons by which his enemies are to assail him ? It is a mistaken system of education indeed, which teaches him thus ; which thrusts out a young man upon the church, unacquainted with the nature of its enemies’ assaults, and liable of course to become the victim of the first powerful attack that is made upon him. Without any doubt, private Christians should have little or nothing to do with all this ground of dispute ; but it is a shame for a min-

ister of the gospel who has the opportunity, not to seize every advantage in his power, to render himself as able as possible to defend the cause which he has espoused.

You perceive then my reasons for studying German writers, and commending the study of them. Truth has nothing to fear from examination. If the sentiments that I espouse will not stand the test of investigation, then I will abandon them. I never shall willingly embrace any sentiments, except on such a condition. But in respect to the study of the more *liberal*, (as they are called,) German writers, in the end, I fear no injury to the sentiments denominated *evangelical*. Exegesis has come, by discussion among them, to a solid and permanent science. That the Scriptural writers taught what we believe to be *orthodoxy*, is now conceded by their most able expositors. The person who reads their works, will see what the spirit of doubt and unbelief can do with the book of God—and where it will carry the men who entertain it. It is a most affecting and awful lesson. But it is an exhibition which has begun among us. The progress of your own sentiments fully illustrates the nature of its advancements. A short time since, almost all the Unitarians of New England were simply Arians. Now there are scarcely any of the younger preachers, who have not outstripped you, and become simple *Humanitarians*. Such was the case in Germany. The divinity of Christ was assailed; inspiration was next doubted and impugned; and this is already begun here. Natural religion next comes in order; and the simple question between the parties here is soon to be, whether *natural* or *revealed* religion is our guide and our hope.

For myself, it is my real conviction that the sooner matters come to this issue, the better. The parties will

then understand each other ; and the public will understand the subject.

Believing however as I now do, while my convictions remain, I must act agreeably to them. I hope I shall never be guilty of exercising an exclusive or persecuting spirit. But while my present views last, I cannot look with indifference on the great contest, which is pending in this part of our country. I must regard the opinions, which you have avowed in your sermon, to be fundamentally subversive of what appears to me the peculiarities of the Christian system. If the doctrine of Christ's divinity and humanity be not true, nor that of the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, and pardon by it ; if human nature be not of itself entirely destitute of principles of holiness that may fit men for heaven, and does not need special regenerating and sanctifying grace : then I know not what there is in the Christian system, that very much concerns our duty or our interest, that is not taught by the principles of natural religion ; nor what there is for which it is our duty to contend. The great question, at present, between you and me is, What does the Bible teach, on the subjects proposed. For our answer to this question, you and I stand accountable to the Judge of quick and dead ; and as ministers of his gospel and interpreters of his word, we are placed under an awful responsibility. If either of us violate the reason which God has given us, in our inquiries ; or are led by partial views, by passion, by prejudice, by thirst for popularity with our friends, or a fear of reproach from those whom we are obliged to consider as opponents ; Christ will require from us an account of our conduct. When I think on this ; and look back and ask myself whether I have conducted this whole dispute, with a view to my account,

and in the fear of God; I cannot but feel solicitude, lest through the deceitfulness of the human heart, something may have escaped me which may prove prejudicial, in some way or other to the promotion of real truth. If you see this, my dear Sir, tell me where and what it is. We have no real interest, but to know, believe and obey the truth. And supposing truth to be, what it now appears to me to be, I cannot suppose otherwise, than that you are endeavouring to inculcate principles radically subversive of the gospel of Christ. Will you do me the justice to believe, that I may have honestly formed such an opinion, without taking my faith from Creeds, or grounding it on tradition, and without the spirit that would establish an Inquisition, or lord it over the consciences of men, or treat you with disrespect.

In a word; with those who have the convictions that I possess of the nature and importance of the gospel system, it can never admit of a question, whether they are to make all the opposition in their power, (provided it be done in the spirit of Christian candor and benevolence,) to the prevalence of sentiments like yours. I cannot but view the question between us as amounting to this; whether we shall retain Christianity, or reject all but the name? If I am wrong; May the Lord forgive me, and grant me better views. If you are wrong, my heart's desire and prayer to God is, that the same blessing may be bestowed on you.

Allowing that I and those with whom I act are sincere in our belief, you yourself would say, that we should be justly chargeable with the greatest inconsistency, did we not feel strong desires to resist the innovations that are attempted to be made, in many important points of our theology. Permit me to add, that real charity may

sometimes attribute strong feelings and a deep interest on this subject, to ardent benevolence towards those whom we think to be in a dangerous condition, rather than to party zeal, blind credulity and ignorance, or an extirminating and injurious spirit.

And now to bring these already protracted letters to a close, will you permit me respectfully and seriously to solicit, that you would look back and review the Sermon, which has occasioned these remarks. Have you represented the sentiments of the great body of Christians in this country correctly? Have you produced the arguments on which they rely? Have you treated them with respect, with gentleness, with tenderness? Has your simple aim been to reason with them, to convince them, and not to hold them up in such an attitude as to excite disgust, or scorn and derision? Whatever your *aim* may have been, the *fact* is, that you have awakened in all those who differ from you a deep sensation of an intentional injury on your part to their feelings, of contumely, and of misrepresentation of their views. Look then with a Christian eye on the unhappy and distracted state of the churches in this land, the glory of all lands! When will our contentions cease; when shall we bring a united offering to our common Lord; if men, like you, who stand in eminent and responsible stations, treat those whom they profess to own as *Christian brethren*, in such a manner, and strive to degrade and render them contemptible?

My dear Sir, I do think these are things, which when you enter your closet to lift up your soul to God, you are bound by sacred obligations to consider. I do not bring these as charges against you; but I speak of the impressions which your discourse, (universally, so far as I know,) has excited in the bosoms of those who espouse the sen-

timents which you condemn. If their impressions are without reason, the wrong may indeed fall upon them. But in reviewing the subjects that have already come under my notice, there appears more reason for those impressions than a lover of Christian meekness and benevolence can approve. When the hours of excitement and the stimulus of party feeling are gone by, you and I shall stand at the bar of that divine Saviour, who searches the hearts and tries the reins of men. There we shall know; whether it will be our condemnation that we have loved him and honored him more than he can claim. There we shall know, whether we need his atoning blood; whether we are permitted to treat with contumely those who place their hopes of salvation in it; and to teach them that the God whom the great body of the faithful in every age have worshipped, is a malignant and detestable being. O my dear Sir, this is no trifling matter. We are immortal beings. We must live forever; and our eternal destiny is in the hands of that Redeemer, about whose dignity and glory we are contending.

When I think on this, I cannot but feel, that the question between us is of deep and radical interest, as it respects our eternal salvation. If the God whom I am bound to adore, has not only revealed himself in the book of nature, but has clearly disclosed his glory in the gospel of Christ, and I mistake after all a revelation so clear; or induced by party feeling, or erroneous philosophy, reject the testimony which he has given; the mistake must be tremendous in its consequences; the rejection will justly incur the divine displeasure. With all this subject however, fully before me, I do not hesitate; I cannot doubt respecting it. When I behold the glory of the Saviour, as revealed in the gospel, I am constrain-

ed to cry out with the believing apostle ; “ My Lord and my God ! ” And when my departing spirit shall quit these mortal scenes, and wing its way to the world unknown ; with my latest breath I desire to pray, as the expiring martyr did, “ LORD JESUS, RECEIVE MY SPIRIT.”

ERRATA.

THE urgency of professional duties, the very limited space of time which could be spared from them to be devoted to these Letters ; and the consequent rapidity with which they were carried through the press, while at the same time nearly one half of the labor of composition was performed, from day to day ; constitute, as the writer believes, some apology for several errors of the press which escaped detection until it was too late, and for less care in regard to the style in some cases, than might reasonably be expected from one in different circumstances.

The Errata, which a mere cursory reading has detected, and which may be corrected with the pen, are the following :

Page 29 for *ὑποσπασσεις* read *ὑποστασεις*.

63 emended — amended.

75 emended — amended.

83 *αληθινος* — *αληθινος*.

98 instead of “ attributes, or works, to him,” read “ attributes, or works, as belonging to him.”

108 for *δυναμεις* (twice) read *δυναμεις*,

117 for “ you and I,” read “ you and me ; ” (in a part of the edition only.)

122 (line 11th from the bottom) omit “ rational.”

124 (line 14th from the bottom,) for “ touch only on that which,” read “ touch only that on which.”

131 “ class may found,” read “ class may be found.”

136 (top line) omit “ term.”

138 “ or that I could even wish,” read “ or than I could even wish.”

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: May 2006

PreservationTechnologies
A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 016 130 254 5